

Kickstart Employment Sessions

Self-directed learning modules

COMMUNICATING CLEARLY

How to use this sheet : Follow the sections and write your responses on a separate piece of paper. This should take approximately 1-2 hours.

We are constantly communicating - at work, with friends, at home, everywhere! This can look like everything from having a debate to writing emails, speaking in meetings to writing cover letters, or creating reports and sharing ideas... the list goes on!

One way to improve our productivity, communication confidence, and relationship building, is by making sure we're communicating clearly and effectively.

In this module you'll learn more about the 7Cs of communication as a device to ensure your communication skills are well-constructed, refined, professional and effective! This module will emphasise written communication in the context of the workplace.

According to the seven Cs, communication needs to be:

clear, concise, concrete, correct, coherent, complete and courteous.

Let's see what that looks like in practice.

Your Turn

Find something you've written that you'd like to improve. Why not try finding a past cover letter, email or application and working through the checklist?

1. Clear

Be clear about your goal and your message so there are no doubts in the purpose of your communication.

Make sure you've minimised the number of ideas in each sentence and rephrased any unnecessarily complex language. It should be easy for your reader to understand your meaning and people shouldn't have to "read between the lines" and make assumptions about what you're trying to say.

Your checklist! ✓

Is your purpose clear? Be explicit.

Do they have to dig through all the text to understand why you're reaching out?

Have you packed too many ideas into long sentences?

Is there a clear action for the other person to follow up with?

If you're asking for something, be explicit! If you make it easy for people to understand how they can help you, it will be easier for them to help you.

Is all the information clear and not hidden in paragraphs and unnecessary information? Busy people will be put off if you're making them sift through a lot of content to understand what you want, to understand the point of what you're saying, which can lead to CVs being overlooked and emails being ignored.

So, what might this look like in practice? Here's an example sponsorship template.

Hi [name]

[Greeting]

My name is ... and I volunteer running a monthly film night for emerging filmmakers based in South-East London. We're a grassroots film club creating opportunities for young filmmakers breaking into the industry and are looking screenwriting software brands to partner with for prizes for an annual competition, and I wanted to explore whether this might be something [brand name] is interested in being involved with?

[Following on with more details]

2. Concise

When you're concise in your communication, you want to stick to the point and keep it brief. Your audience doesn't want to read through 5 sentences when an idea could be explained in 5.

It can be a sign of strong communication skills to be able to convey an idea in simple, digestible language.

Are there any adjectives or filler words that you can remove?
"for instance," "definitely," "kind of," "literally," "basically," etc

Are there any unnecessary sentences?

Have you repeated yourself in different ways?

Often hiring managers will be skimming through hundreds of CVs when recruiting. Make it easy for them to spot your skills by not making them dig through paragraphs and paragraphs of text!

Editing your CV? People often repeat their skills in their personal statement and work histories. If it's not teaching people more about you and it's already been said, either rephrase or delete!

3. Concrete

When your message is concrete, then your audience has a clear picture of what you're telling them. There are details, facts, and all the necessary information.

Inviting someone to an event? Include details of where, when, tickets, links, cost.

Writing a cover letter? Don't simply say you're a strong communicator or problem solver, show evidence, give examples, give metrics. This comes back to credibility and how you can back up your claims with demonstrable experience.

How about in practice? Lets think about cover letters.

Instead of saying how brilliant you are in doing x,y,d, give evidence. It's not enough to say how you'd be a great fit for a role in airy, non-specific language - instead, try structuring this as "my experience in x makes me a strong candidate for [the role], because the transferable skills will allow me to step into the position with confidence and work autonomously."

4. Correct

A simple point, but one of the most overlooked. Spelling, grammar, and how to present yourself in written text is very important!

You editing and how you write is a reflection on you. Does this demonstrate the time, consideration, professionalism and trustworthiness you're looking to convey when you're communicating? Avoid being someone who writes about their strong attention to detail in text that is full of errors and inconsistencies.

There's no faster giveaway that an email is copy and pasted than if your greeting is a different font and size to your body of text.

Consider whether the tone and language is appropriate for your audience and if it's something easy for them to digest. The technical terms should fit the audience's level of knowledge and experience.

Does the person have all the information they need to act?

Is your information well-defined? Does it need to be evidenced?

Are you coming across as a credible, confident, knowledgeable person to be speaking on this issue?

Will this lead to the reader having more questions which you could have been answered?

With cover letters, if non-specific and airy language isn't followed up with examples of how these skills translate to the specific role, it's more likely to be assumed that the cover letter is copy and pasted.

Are there spelling errors?

Are names and titles spelled correctly?

Is your punctuation, text size, and font consistent?

Is the language complexity and vocabulary a good fit for the reader?

Do you come across as a strong communicator who pays attention to detail?

Have you attached the files you said you would attach?

5. Coherent

When your communication is coherent, it follows a logical order. All points are connected and relevant to the main topic and the tone and flow of the text is consistent.

If you're writing an email, or talking to someone about an idea (often in interviews!), it's easy to try to convey as much as you can about all the things you've done that are successful or impressive to legitimise you or cast you in a strong light. Often this fails to answer the specific thing you've been asked or need to address.

Keeping it coherent helps someone logically follow your idea, and demonstrates good communication skills. This isn't always something explicitly thought when you write an email or make a request or share an idea, but it's clear to the reader when done poorly.

Writing an email?

Try something along the lines of...

introduction > who you are > why you're emailing > a bit of background > what you need from them > a call to action and how that person can help > bringing it back to your initial line of why you're reaching out.

6. Complete

In a complete message, the audience has everything they need to be informed and, if necessary, take action.

If your message includes a call to action your audience should clearly know what you want, and what you want them to do.

This can be anything from sharing event information and wanting people to sign up, or applying for a job and asserting that you're looking forward to hearing from them should you be up for an interview.

Are the details there? All the relevant information they need to act or make a decision – contact names, dates, times, locations, and so on?

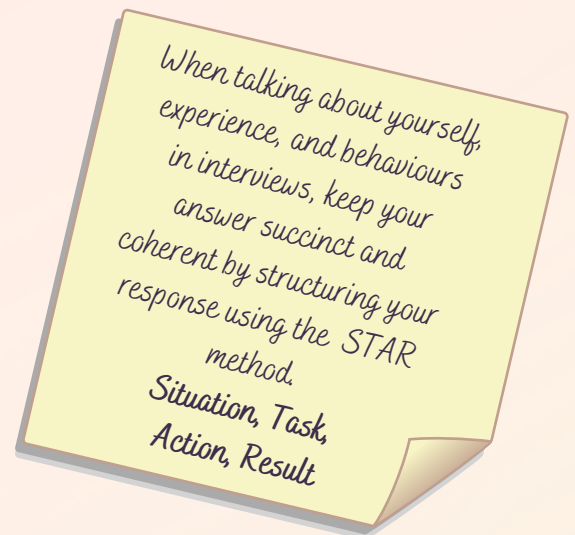
Have you read this aloud to yourself?

Does your phrasing feel like it flows?

Have you jumped about and repeated yourself?

Is it easy for the person to understand what's expected of them?

Have you overloaded with detail before you've gotten to your point?



Is there a clear call to action? Will the reader know what they need to do?

Is it clear what is expected of the reader, or will they be thinking "...so what?"

Have you included all relevant information?

7. Courteous

Don't burn bridges before you even begin because you're not communicating courteously!

Courteous communication is friendly, open, and honest. It's unassuming, and unexpectant.

Particularly with employers, if you're coming across as curt, unfriendly, and expectant, it's a red flag about whether you're someone they'd want to work with and how well you'd represent their company brand and team if you were to be hired.

Being impolite after a rejection of a job application reinforces in your employer's mind that they were right to not hire you. However, if you reply thanking them for the consideration, and that you're trying to understand how to better improve your job application or interview skills with feedback, without expectations that they owe you this (they don't!), it's more likely they will give you their time and offer advice or alternative opportunities. Already, you're someone they're more likely to keep in mind for future opportunities because you're demonstrating good relationship management.

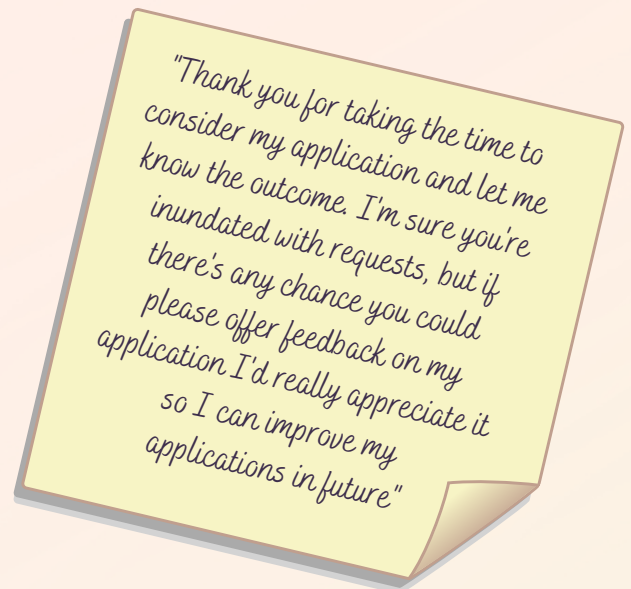
Have you introduced yourself politely?

Please and thank yous?

Thanked the person for their time and signed off with a farewell message?

Is your tone friendly?

DO you sound demanding or expectant?



Your Turn

How did you get on editing your own piece of communication? Now that you've flagged where you can improve, why not try rewriting the same piece of communication keeping these principles in mind?

Head to CRATE Future Young Enterprise Hub to learn more about employment skills and resources for self-improvement

future-young-enterprise.crateboost.com