Communication Foundations

Foreword

Speech: Essentials of Communication: A Guide to Interacting Effectively in Today's World™ is a five-unit elective for high school students, providing theoretical and practical knowledge and skills for truthful and effective communication. Students will learn about communication truths and theories, characteristics of language, interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, and public speaking.

This course contains information and activities that show students how to effectively express ideas and interact with others in the world around them. Studying the units and applying the communication principles in this course will help students discover ways in which their knowledge enables them to honor God, communicate truth, develop relationships, meet the needs of others, fulfill social obligations, exchange information, and reach personal goals.

This course also provides a special application of practical and effective communication skills to the business world, a destination towards which many career-minded students will be heading.

Speech: Essentials of Communication contains the following units. The unit for this student workbook is highlighted below.

Unit 1 — Communication Foundations

Unit 2 — Language Characteristics

Unit 3 — Interpersonal Relationships

Unit 4 — Understanding Groups

Unit 5 — Presenting and Interpreting Public Messages

Why is Communication Essential?

Welcome to *Speech: Essentials of Communication.* The development and proper use of communication skills is one of the most important goals we should strive to achieve in life. As beings that are created in the image of God, we have a God-given ability to communicate through spoken, written, and nonverbal means; however, because of the entrance of sin into the world through Adam, we often witness a distortion of the communication process that God originally provided. We have, as a result of the Fall, seen the breaking down of human relationships and communication.

In response to this situation, God has chosen to communicate to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ; the Bible; and His Creation. His communication to the world has been "essential" to restoring relationships and the communication process that people need.

Because of God's communication with us, Christians have been provided with the spiritual resources they need in order to properly develop effective communication skills. Following the pattern of the "Master Communicator," we have the responsibility and privilege to communicate the truths of God's Word and His Creation to others throughout the world. As a part of this task, we must learn to make an accurate and efficient use of communication tools and procedures that are commonly found in society, whether at home, school, or in the business world.

For Christians, communication is crucial to not only receiving but also providing truth. Each day, you have the opportunity to interact with family, friends, teachers, co-workers, and any number of other people in a variety of settings. The effectiveness of your interactions with others influences your ability to communicate well for everyone's benefit.

Speech: Essentials of Communication is intended to show you in a practical, hands-on way, how to be an effective communicator for God in the world. As you move through each of the five units, you will identify, analyze, and evaluate communication skills and processes that you will need for spiritual, moral, personal, social, and professional growth. Doing so will help you develop and demonstrate your own communication skills and thereby assist in building your ability and confidence when you are called upon to interact with others.

The course covers concepts and ideas that are widely-used in the field of communication. School, church, home, and work-world settings provide real-life scenarios that allow for consideration of how these communication principles can be applied in real-world situations. Interacting with the concepts and perspectives in *Speech: Essentials of Communication* gives you the opportunity to develop discernment and become better equipped to practice a Christian understanding of communication in the world around you.

Unit One: Communication Foundations

In this unit, you'll be introduced to foundational elements of communication. You'll start by learning a formal definition of communication and progress into the exploration of communication types and functions. Then, you'll learn some practical techniques that will help you develop the competence and confidence you'll need to express God's truths and your thoughts in an effective and easy-to-understand manner. You'll also discover how perception influences your communication decisions. Finally, you'll be asked to examine the way you communicate as it relates to how you understand yourself.

Each section of this unit will provide a more detailed explanation of the various parts of the communication process. After carefully examining your personal communication style, you'll apply useful methods that can help you make adjustments to enhance your ability to share information. By starting with a general discussion of communication and then moving step-by-step toward self-examination, you'll learn to personally apply communication techniques that are important in the achievement of spiritual, personal, social, academic, and professional goals.

Interpersonal ⟩⟩⟩ Small Group

Objectives

When you have completed Unit 1, you should be better prepared to:

- Define communication, its parts, process, and functions. (Section I)

- Describe the Transactional Model process. (Section I)

- List and define the types of communication. (Section I)

- Describe the relationships between mass media and its audiences. (Section I)

- Defend the importance of effective communication skills. (Section I)

- List and describe four key points that are used by competent communicators. (Section I)

- Compile appropriate communication strategies. (Sections I and III)

- Define perception and compare its three stages. (Section II)

- Identify five psychological processes of perception. (Section II)

- Identify and analyze the use of stereotypes. (Section II)

- Demonstrate the use(s) of steps of perception for communication competence. (Section II)

- Describe influences that affect your confidence. (Section III)

- Label the quadrants of the Johari Window model and describe how, when one quadrant is larger than the others, it affects communication. (Section III)

- Discuss appropriate uses of self-disclosure. (Section III)

Public **Communication**

I. Discovering the Foundations of Effective Communication

Since communication affects every aspect of life, you'll want to get a firm grasp of the foundational knowledge needed to become an effective communicator. Section I presents an opportunity to learn fundamental communication truths, vocabulary, factors, and theories that can serve you well throughout your lifetime. The lessons for this section are as follows:

Introduction to Communication

This lesson introduces you to the "Transactional Model" of communication. As you study this model, you'll become familiar with the components of the communication process and their functions. This model demonstrates that communication is fast-paced, interactive, and sensitive to context and culture. At the completion of this lesson, you should be better prepared to:
- **Define communication, its parts, process, and functions.**
- **Describe the Transactional Model process.**

Types of Communication

As you examine communication scenarios that are typically encountered in everyday life, you'll be introduced to five types of communication: "intrapersonal," "interpersonal," "small group," "public," and "mass" communication. You'll also discover how spiritual, physical, social, practical, and personal needs affect communication. At the completion of this lesson, you should be better prepared to:
- **List and define the types of communication.**
- **Describe the relationships between mass media and its audiences.**

The Importance of Communication

You'll learn that communication demonstrates its importance in four areas of our lives: identity, relationships, health, and work. You'll observe that the use and development of effective communication in these areas can provide numerous benefits and the achievement of goals. At the completion of this lesson, you should be better prepared to:
- **Defend the importance of effective communication skills.**

Becoming a Competent Communicator

In this lesson, you'll learn to improve your communication by recognizing options and evaluating them to determine whether or not they're right and appropriate for a particular situation. At the completion of this lesson, you should be better prepared to:
- **List and describe four key points that are used by competent communicators.**

Understanding the communication types, tools, purposes, and processes covered in this section can help you fulfill your God-given responsibilities in the give and take of daily conversation and interaction.

Introduction to Communication

Objectives
- Define communication, its parts, process, and functions.
- Describe the Transactional Model process.

Vocabulary

communication – a systemic process in which people send and receive messages through symbols to discover and interpret meanings

feedback – verbal or nonverbal responses to a message

systemic – pertaining to a system or systems; pertaining to or affecting the entire body

interact – to act upon each other

message – organized communication element that includes meanings and symbols, encoding and decoding

encoding – thinking process of transforming ideas and emotions into symbols and organizing them into a message

decoding – the process of transforming and interpreting another's message back into the receiver's own meaning

Transactional Model – a theory describing the relationship among elements of communication

participants – the people involved in the communication; senders and receivers

field of experience – an individual's life history that affects his or her communication approach

noise – interference with or a distraction from the communication process; it can occur externally (outside the receiver), internally (thoughts of the receiver) or semantically (unintended meanings brought on by symbols in the message)

context – circumstances important to the situation

Communication is a process within which an individual interacts with others by sending and receiving messages. It may occur in an informal conversation with another person, within a group, through public speaking or a presentation, or through interaction with mass media. The process itself includes context, participants, messages, channels, noise (or absence of), and *feedback*.

In her book, *Communication in Our Lives*[i], Julia Wood defines communication as "a *systemic* process in which people *interact* with and through symbols to [discover] and interpret meanings." This definition reveals several important factors to successful communication.

Factor 1: Communication Is a Process
Communication is ongoing. Previous experiences influence our responses to people in present interactions. For example, if a specific clerk at a store was very helpful and kind to you in the past, you might seek him or her out for future questions.

On another level, communication is also a process in that first we consider what our *message* will be and to whom we want to communicate. Communicating

messages involves processes of sending and receiving, meanings, symbols, and **encoding** or **decoding**. We transfer the message to the intended person or group; they give feedback non-verbally and/or verbally. The act of communication does not simply begin the moment we speak, but rather from the moment we consider the communication through the feedback.

A communication model often used to describe this complex process is the **Transactional Model**. This model identifies the components of the communication process and explains their functions. It also demonstrates the way in which communication occurs between **participants**, referring to the participants as "senders" and "receivers" of the communication. The participants interact, both sending and receiving messages through their senses. As a participant receives a message, he or she perceives its meaning, decodes the message to try to understand its intended meaning, arrives at an understood meaning of the message, encodes and organizes the ideas and emotions of the message, prepares to transmit a message of his or her own, and then sends this new message to the other participant.

The Transactional Model specifically describes the participants involved in the communication process as either sender-receivers or receiver-senders. This acknowledges that a person can send a message and receive a message at the same time.

For example, while telling your parents about an activity in which you excelled, you may observe your parents smiling back at you, saying, "Wonderful!" and hugging you. The messages they are communicating to you are known as feedback. Feedback can be verbal or nonverbal, as through the word "Wonderful!" (verbal) combined with the supporting hug (nonverbal). Feedback can be intentional or unintentional also. Both messages and feedback are received through a **field of experience**. The receiver's field of experience, or life history, shapes his or her interpretation of the message. In the example in this paragraph, past experience may tell you that when your parents smile in that way, they are very pleased with you, and a reward may follow.

Noise is also a factor in the Transactional Model. Noise is interference with or a distraction from the communication process. It could be the sound of a child crying, a dripping faucet, pleasant music, or thoughts within your own mind as you consider what the other person is saying or contemplate what you will say next.

The **context** within which the communication process occurs contributes to how messages are received and also influences the exchange of messages. Context refers to the setting and environment. For example, the conversation of two friends would be influenced by whether or not they are in a room alone or surrounded by people. A conversation can also be influenced by whether or not the other person is a friend or a professional associate. You might speak differently to your best friend than you would to your teacher or parent.

It's important to note that the Transactional Model also demonstrates that communication is very interactive, with sending and receiving occurring simultaneously. This process is complex because elements of communication don't occur in isolated steps. They usually occur simultaneously and in no specific order.

Factor 2: Communication Is Systemic

Put simply, systemic means that when communication occurs, each part affects the other parts, working together like the gears of a machine. As one gear turns, it moves some of the others, which then affect more gears down the line.

Where, what, and how you communicate can help or hinder the workings of the system. Timing can be important when it comes to communicating your needs. Consider the decisions you make when approaching a teacher to request permission to hand in a late assignment. Do you think about when the most appropriate time would be to make such a request? For example, would you approach your teacher when he is engaged in a conversation with someone else? Or, might you wait until your teacher has adequate time and attention to listen to and evaluate your request? Here, you are using the systemic process of communication intuitively. You are turning the gears of your communication machine before speaking, knowing that doing so will affect delivery and future results.

Transactional Model of Communication
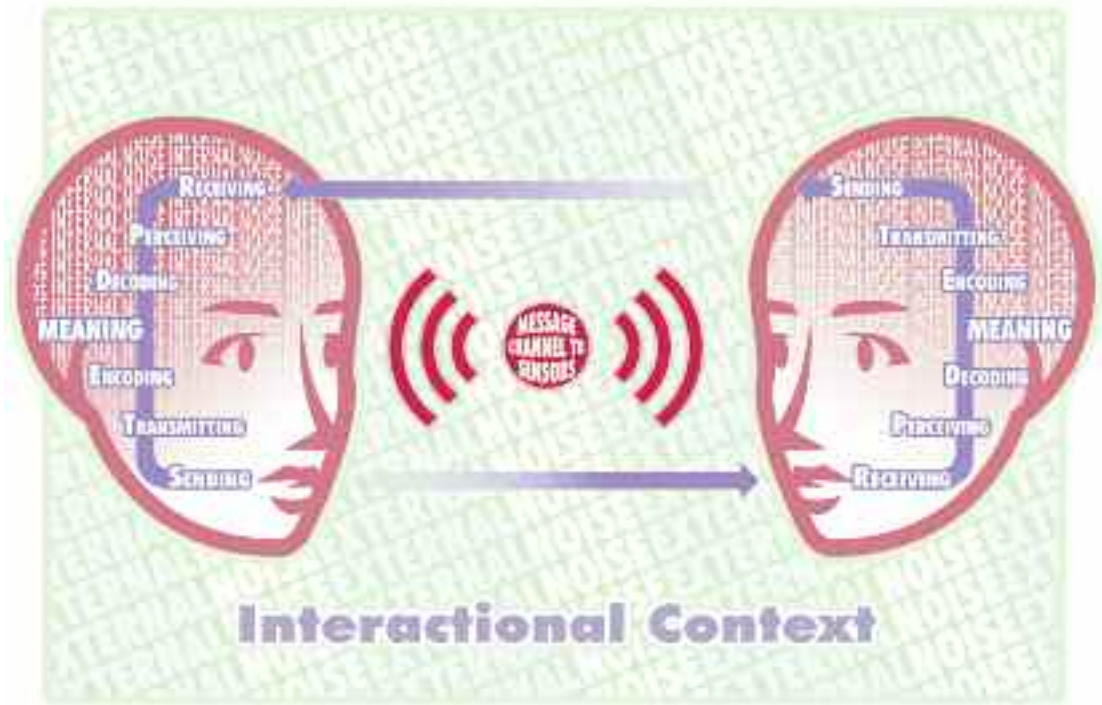
Channel: The channel consists of the air in which sound and light travel, enabling people who are communicating to send and receive gestures and messages between them. The channel conveys and regulates sound or viewing quality, determining, for example, why the sound of blowing wind might make it difficult for someone to hear a message or a dim light might make it difficult for someone to see a gesture.

Context: Context refers to the conditions, situation, or surroundings in which communication occurs.

Receiving: The receiving of a message occurs most frequently through a person's ears and eyes, although touch can sometimes play a role in this as well.

Sending: The sending of a message occurs through a person's voice, body gestures, or movements, although touch can be an important part of this as well.

Internal noise: Internal noise refers to distractions in people that obscure, confuse, or interfere with a message. Internal noise could consist of thoughts about other things, headaches, sleepiness, or any number of other distractions that are internally created by an individual.

External noise: External noise refers to distractions in people that obscure, confuse, or interfere with a message. External noise could consist of the sound from a jackhammer outside a building, the animated movements of a fight going on nearby, the blinking of a light bulb, or any number of other distractions that occur outside the body of an individual.

Perceive: Perceiving refers to a receiver's interpretation of a message, as all stimuli (hearing, seeing, feeling) are combined to receive a whole message.

Transmit: This refers to the format for communication. In face-to-face interaction and communication between people, format includes a person's voice/mouth, hearing/ears, and body/gestures.

Decode: Decoding occurs when a receiver perceives a message and then connects it to past messages or experiences in order to interpret and store it.

Encode: Encoding occurs when a sender combines senses to develop a message in a way that can be sent out through language, gestures, and/or touch. This new message will, if successful, be accurately interpreted by its receiver.

Feedback: Feedback refers to a person's interpreted and projected response to another person's message.

Factor 3: Communication Is Symbolic

Our verbal and non-verbal communication are influenced by accepted cultural symbols. The alphabet is made up of symbols that form words of the written English language. Hand gestures, like waving or pointing, mean approximately the same thing to everyone within our culture. We use some symbols routinely, knowing that others will understand what we are communicating.

When a child is first born, a mother may find it difficult to pick up cues from the child or understand the child's crying or movements. As the weeks progress, the child may move her mouth a certain way or wiggle and coo when she is hungry. She may lift her arms when her mother comes into the room, signaling that she wants her mother to pick her up. Or she might rub her eyes when she is tired. A customized symbolic communication is developing between the mother and child.

Just as a mother and child develop a communication system, so a culture designs one and then teaches its communities the meanings behind each symbol. You learn the alphabet so that you can spell, read, and write to communicate. As you learn to drive, you study the traffic signs to understand their meanings. You and your community or culture develop and expand upon the symbols that you have at your disposal to successfully communicate. You design and utilize the symbols to communicate your understanding of each other, your purposes and needs, and your involvement in the world around you.

Types of Communication

As mentioned earlier, where, how, and when you communicate with others will affect communication success. Group sizes and intent also affect how the communication will be received. Each communication setting emphasizes a different approach and sometimes a different set of skills.

Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication is communication with oneself, sometimes labeled "self-talk" or simply "thinking." It is our conscience that puts words to our thoughts and feelings. We might hear it when we're trying to make a big decision: "Should I do this? Should I not do this?"

We carry on conversations with ourselves daily, considering our options, memorizing information on a test, or rehearsing a conversation we want to have with someone else. Sometimes rehearsing conversations helps us gain confidence and consider the consequences of our behavior when we approach the "real" conversation. We solve many problems by communicating with ourselves and considering options.

What would you do in the following situation? Your parents promised that you would get a $5 per week allowance increase in February. It is almost April and they haven't mentioned the increase again, but your parents have praised you often for your hard work at home and school. What do you do? Do you run up to your parents the next time you see them and demand the increase promised you? Do you say nothing and wait for your parents to bring the subject up again? Or do you respectfully ask your parents about the possibility of a pay increase?

As you consider your options, pay attention to what you are doing. Are you having a conversation with yourself? Are you picturing each of the scenarios and examining the outcomes? Or are you writing down your options to measure the best actions to take? Each person may take a slightly different approach to decide how to handle the situation. But in all cases, making a decision will require some type of self-talk, whether it is in your head or on paper. Using intrapersonal communication to consider the possible consequences of your behavior can help you to communicate successfully.

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication occurs between at least two people. We use this most common form of communication to interact with, play with, influence, relate to, and help family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers. Through interpersonal communication, you are able to establish and maintain personal relationships. The casual conversations you have daily with family and friends may seem unimportant; however, each time you communicate, you are sharing a little more of yourself.

Interpersonal communication can also occur between two strangers. The small talk that you exchange with the person seated next to you on a bus or a plane is considered interpersonal communication. Your exchange might be very "impersonal," but you are interacting with him or her person-to-person.

Many communication experts like to define interpersonal relationships qualitatively; that is, they examine the quality of the interaction rather than just the number of individuals involved.[ii] For instance, an exchange between a husband and wife would be considered more interpersonal than an exchange between a shoe salesman and a customer. Likewise, the conversation among a small group of friends talking with one another on a personal level would also be considered interpersonal communication. That same group in a small group communication setting, however, would have a different focus. Thus, the category under which communication would be listed is not only dependent upon the number of people but upon the goal of the communication. In the case of a group of friends, the communication occurs in a casual, personal setting. Below, under small groups, you

will see the focus of the group communication as different from personal sharing. We will study more about interpersonal communication in Unit 3.

Small Group Communication

Small group communication consists of two or more people interacting with each other to solve problems, share ideas and experiences, relate to one another, and influence others. Small group communication differs from interpersonal communication in that individuals communicate in order to reach a specified goal. Examples of small groups include: families, study groups, work teams, town councils, and boards of directors.

For example, you may be assigned to a team within your school, church, or organization. There may be casual times within the group event when you might share personal information, but the purpose of the group (for example, that of creating a product, solving a problem, or analyzing a situation) influences the type of communication and results of group interaction. An athletic team works together at practice and at games in order to win fairly. A science project group shares information and makes decisions to complete an assignment. A family communicates with one another to support and help its members.

A small-group structure is more formal than that required of interpersonal communication. A more formal structure is necessary in order to keep a group focused on the goals, the desired outcome from the group. Small group communication will be studied further in Unit 4.

Public Communication

Public communication is a process by which one person or a group presents a message to another group in a formal manner. This form of communication held great importance for the citizens of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. Through public communication, a citizen informed others of his concerns and persuaded the listeners to embrace the communicator's opinions so that change might occur.

Public speaking is still an essential aspect of the democratic process. Congressmen, senators, county commissioners, and judges all use public communication to inform the public of their agenda and gain

support. However, politicians are not the only ones who utilize public speaking skills. Private individuals are sometimes asked to speak to groups as well. Public speaking skills are used in presentations before a class, a company, or other organization. Debates or persuasive presentations are also used to move listeners to action or to persuade them of the opinions of the presenters.

For example, a teacher relies on public communication to inform his or her students. Public communication is the most commonly used means of sharing information in a classroom setting. Unlike a small group, a classroom has many members. If all the members want to participate at once in the exchange, there will be chaos.

Much study has been dedicated to the development and delivery of speeches, debates, and presentations. Their effectiveness is influenced by the reception of the listeners. In a classroom situation, students are more apt to listen if learning is presented informally with discussion, examples, and activities integrated throughout the presentation. In other situations, a speaker might need to have a more formal tone in order to capture the audience's attention. In Unit 5, "Presenting and Interpreting Public Messages," we will study in depth the methods of developing, organizing, styling, and delivering speeches.

Mass Communication

Mass communication is defined as the transmission of messages to a large audience. The messages can be transmitted or produced in many different forms such as television, newspapers, magazines, radio, movies, or various digital forms. Because the messages are intended for a large audience with a wide variety of interests, backgrounds, and preferences, mass communication is far less personal than interpersonal communication, small group communication, and even public communication. For example, television commercials aired during the Super Bowl® are seen by more than five million people. Within that five million people there are Caucasians, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, men, women, teenagers, elderly people, construction workers, business executives, and so on.

Mass communication is a powerful influence on North American culture. It often shapes public *perception* of what is fashionable or "in." It shapes popular public opinion on important social issues and consumerism. It can also reinforce wrong perceptions or prejudices. Through mass communication, one is entertained, informed, and influenced. People also influence mass media through their responses to it, thereby shaping the future of mass communication.

Using the list of words below, match each word to its definition. Write the corresponding letter for the word in the space to the left of the definition.

1.1 _____ a verbal or nonverbal response

1.2 _____ a systemic process in which people interact with and through symbols to discover and interpret meanings

1.3 _____ an individual involved in the communication process

1.4 _____ anything that might interfere with the communication process

1.5 _____ communication between at least two people

1.6 _____ communication used to solve problems and share ideas and experiences

1.7 _____ represent objects, ideas, processes, things, or events

1.8 _____ transmission of messages to a large audience

a. communication

b. feedback

c. interpersonal

d. intrapersonal

e. mass communication

f. noise

g. sender-receiver

h. small group communication

i. symbols

Answer the following questions, using information from the first two lessons ("Introduction to Communication" and "Types of Communication").

1.9 Define *message*: _____

_____

_____

1.10 What are the three factors of communication? Communication is:

a. P_____

b. S_____

c. S_____

1.11 Label the parts of the Transactional Model that are missing.

_____ Noise

_____ Noise

PERCEIVING
DECODING
MEANING
ENCODING
TRANSMITTING
SENDING

MESSAGE
CHANNEL TO
SENSORS

TRANSMITTING
ENCODING
MEANING
DECODING
PERCEIVING
RECEIVING

Interactional _____
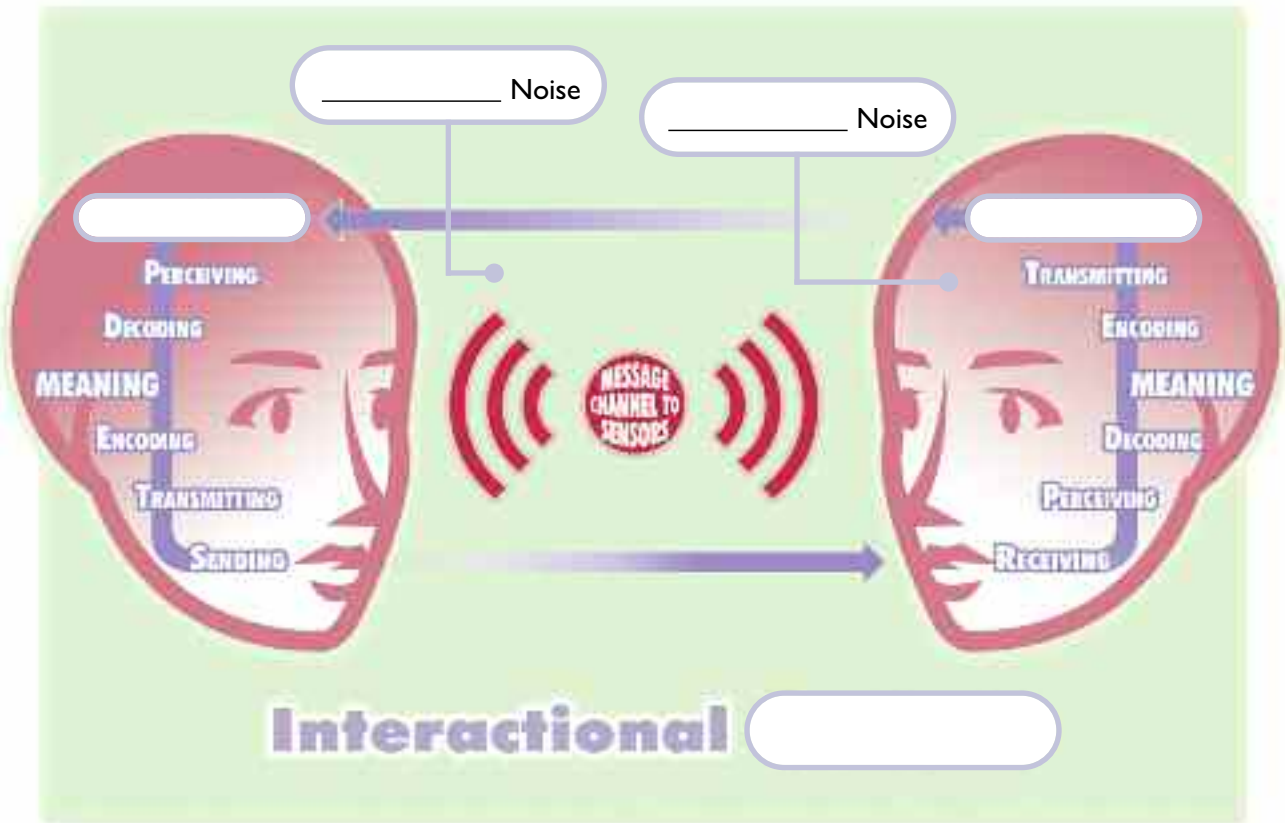
1.12 The Transactional Model demonstrates that communication is very _____ ,

with _____ and _____

occurring _____ .

✓ Teacher check _____
                                    Initial   Date

Skill-Building Activity: Communication Log

1.13 Keep a log of the different types of communication activities in which you engage during the rest of the day.

Before moving on to the next class session, categorize each activity according to the type of communication it was and the purpose(s) of the communication.

During the next class, discuss with your teacher and/or other students what types of communication are in your log. Also discuss the following questions:

    a. Did the variety of activities surprise you?

    b. Did you find that you were more involved in one type of communication than others?

    c. Which one(s) were you most involved in, and why do you think it happened that way?

✓ Teacher check _____
                                    Initial   Date

The Importance of Communication

Before you begin the day's lesson, think about the communication log activity you completed. Discuss the following questions with your teacher and/or other students:

- What types of communication are in your communication log?
- Did the variety of activities surprise you?
- Did you find that you were more involved in one type of communication than others?
- Which one(s) and why do you think it happened that way?

After you finish your discussion, look at the lesson objective, read the lesson, and complete the problems that follow.

Objective

- **Defend the importance of effective communication skills.**

We spend a large part of our waking hours communicating with others, whether we are talking, listening, or reacting non-verbally to what we hear and see. We use communication to know who we are, to maintain relationships, to achieve a sense of well-being, and to accomplish tasks. It's important because it helps us achieve the goals of everyday life.

Identity

We discover who we are partially by what other people communicate to us. If a child is told by his parents that he is a good boy or that he's smart, it is likely that he will grow up believing those things about himself, especially if these concepts are later reinforced by people he respects such as teachers, friends, and family.

People often try to live up to the expectations of others. If a friend believes in you and tells you that you have the talent to win a part in the school play, you may feel more confident about your tryout and may reflect it on stage. What others think of you can manifest itself in your actions.

Relationships

Communication is a part of building relationships with others. Through communication, we get to know someone better, receive help in a crisis, feel a part of a group, find comfort, get something done, and enjoy ourselves. Relationships are often strengthened when we communicate openly and honestly.

If you suddenly stop being with your friends, stop sharing ideas with them, and stop engaging in everyday talk, your relationship will suffer. You need to communicate routinely in order to keep relationships alive. Without effective communication, most relationships eventually collapse. However, with effective communication, relationships can thrive and become a more important aspect of our lives.

"Relationships are strengthened when we communicate openly and honestly."

Health

Communication is not only important in order to sustain and deepen personal relationships and to understand ourselves better, but to meet our physical needs as well. Where would we be if we had no way of telling a doctor that we needed help, or if we couldn't ask directions to the nearest gas station, or if it was impossible to discuss a problem with co-workers? Without the skills of communication, it is difficult to meet needs and complete tasks.

Studies have shown that people who maintain close relationships are healthier than those who are socially isolated. Research has also attested to the fact that social isolation can be as hazardous to one's health as any of the common physical threats. Anxiety and depression are more likely to develop in individuals who lack close friends than in those that maintain close relationships. People who maintain strong relationships generally live longer, more fulfilling lives.

Social isolation has become an important topic today as more of our communication takes place in the isolation of our homes, away from others. We spend so much time on a computer, playing video games, or watching television alone that it has cut into our social time dramatically. The studies on social isolation due to technology are ongoing. It may take decades before we fully understand the price we may have paid to live in a high-technology world.

Work

Communication has a special significance in the work place. How well we communicate our skills and personal strengths can affect whether we get the jobs we seek. After we are hired, it will contribute to whether or not the work we do will be successful.

Many jobs are focused upon communicating with customers. If you are hired as a customer representative for a large department store, a customer who is not happy with a product might approach you. If your communication skills are well developed, you may be able to turn a negative situation for the customer into a positive one. Knowing how to calm down a customer without appearing to be condescending is an important skill for customer representatives. One of the most important skills is listening. Through hearing the

needs of the customer, you can respond to the needs and help the customer feel better about his or her interaction with your company.

The same listening and responding skills are applied as managers seek to adjust the work environment. The manager needs to listen to the concerns of his or her employees, consider how both the needs of the employees and those of the organization can be met, then communicate the plan of action effectively.

Regardless of the career you may one day choose, the quality of communication skills will play a large role in your effectiveness in fulfilling responsibilities. The time you take today to sharpen your communication skills will be helpful to your future.

Answer *True* **or** *False*.

1.14 _____ We learn more about who we are by what is communicated to us.

1.15 _____ Communication is not an essential part of a relationship.

1.16 _____ People who are socially isolated are at a greater risk of developing a life threatening disease.

1.17 _____ Communication competency is essential to professional success.

Teacher check _____

Initial   Date

Becoming a Competent Communicator

Have you ever thought about why some people can carry on a conversation more comfortably than others? Why you would rather listen to one speaker than another? Why you might have no difficulty following one teacher's directions but are unable to understand what another teacher expects of you? The answers to these questions involve communication competence.

Communication Competence Defined.
Communication competence is the ability to interact with others in a manner that is honest and appropriate for the situation, the individuals involved, and the task. However, communication is not an exact science. You cannot simply follow a set of procedures to achieve communication competence. How you communicate with a person depends upon the information you need to communicate, your relationship with the person, and his or her background. For example, if you decided to move to another state, you might approach two good friends about the news in two totally different ways. Your first friend may be a very calm, confident person who would take the news straight on, allowing you to discuss the move openly and immediately. The second friend may have often depended upon you for connections to social functions and emotional support. You may have to carefully select the time, place, and manner in which you break the news to your second friend. By using the communication skills you learn about in this course—that of listening, watching for cues, and making sound judgments on time, place, and manner of communication—you should be able to communicate your move to another state successfully to both friends.

Competent communication requires knowledge, skill, and creativity. Not every competent communicator will have the same approaches to communication situations. It is the purpose of this course to enhance and broaden your communication skills, not dictate a style. The greater the number of communication choices available to you, the greater the likelihood that you will be able to communicate more effectively.

Situation Informs the Approach. As mentioned above, communication occurs in a variety of contexts. Two friends talking privately is considered interpersonal communication. The context of the situation provides a framework for the two friends to communicate. It also affects the roles that will be played. For example, the two friends communicate by taking turns sharing information. One person does not sit silently while the other person engages in a formal monologue. Allowing only one person to be heard would not be appropriate for the situation.

The context also influences the *norms* that govern interactions between people. If you have a job, consider how you talk to your employer versus your coworkers. If your employer asks you to give him an

update on some work he has asked you to do, you will probably respond in a formal manner, explaining the challenges and how you overcame them, telling him how far along you are. When talking with your coworkers, you may laugh about funny situations that occurred while you were working. You may admit a mistake or two you did that caused you to redo the work. Your communication with co-workers is much more informal than with your employer. In this example, you would have considered the one to whom you were speaking, what was asked of you, and what the consequences of your communication would have been. With your employer, you would want to demonstrate your competence on the job. With your coworkers, you are interested in developing a more personal relationship that is based on camaraderie, trust, and friendship.

To further illustrate that communication competence is influenced by situation, let us consider standards for conduct in a public setting versus a private setting. In private, people tend to be more open about their feelings. They are more apt to be open and show affection, whereas in public, conversation topics remain relatively impersonal and safer. Nothing is said that you wouldn't mind being repeated. Emotions are kept to a minimum as well as displays of affection. With these standards in mind, it would be more considerate for a man to privately ask his beloved for her hand in marriage than to do so in an awkward public setting. Communication is most appropriate when it follows the standards set by the context.

Appropriate for the Individuals. Our communication competence is *evaluated* in terms of the person(s) with whom we are communicating. As in the example of the employer versus the coworkers, whom you are communicating with affects how you communicate. Everyone has different tiers, or categories, of acquaintances. Some people are your peers, others your superiors, and others may look up to you for guidance.

Appropriate for the Task. Successful communication occurs when two people interact in a way that pursues what is right. If your brother interrupts you while you are talking to a friend on the phone, yelling at him may make you feel in control; but it might anger him and cause him to shout back at you, escalating the exchange. Instead, you could cover the mouthpiece on the phone and tell him you can talk to him as soon as you finish your phone conversation. If you talk to your brother in this second approach, he is more likely to leave you alone until you complete your call. Considering how the person might react to your words is a good way to anticipate communication success.

There might be times, though, when you say all the "right" things but do not get what you are seeking. Communication is not an exact science because everyone comes to the act of communication with his or her own experiences. People can react in unpredictable ways and at times in an irrational manner.

Consider the following situation between two friends. Michelle approaches Heather to invite her to see a new play that has just opened downtown. Heather has already heard about the play and decided it's not something she's comfortable seeing. However, Heather knows Michelle is sensitive, so she politely tells Michelle that the play doesn't sound like her cup of tea, but she's thankful for the invitation. Frustrated, Michelle replies, "You think you're too good to hang out with me, don't you?"

Heather did as much as she could to satisfy Michelle's needs and her own, but she failed—Michelle was left wanting. However, Heather can still be considered a competent or skilled communicator because she adequately communicated her response in a manner that was honest and considerate.

Competent Communication is Honest. Nearly 400 years ago, Miguel De Cervantes penned one of the most often quoted sayings in the world: "Honesty is the best policy." That statement still holds true today. Competent communication requires honesty. Lying might get what you seek, but the successful results will be short-lived. Sooner or later the truth will become known. The person to whom you lied will feel cheated and will doubt if he or she can trust you. Future attempts to communicate with the person will be tainted by your past dishonest behavior.

However, competent communication does not insist on a person declaring the truth bluntly. Consider, for instance, a doctor who is faced with the task of informing a family that a family member has died during surgery. If telling the truth was the only concern, he might say, "She's dead." However, that approach would not be appropriate for the family. Most doctors would consider the family's feelings and tell them the truth about their family member in a way that shows respect and concern.

"Competent communication requires honesty."

))) **Describe the meaning of each of the four key points to competent communication.**

1.18 Situation informs the approach: _____

_____

_____

1.19 Appropriate for individuals: _____

_____

_____

1.20 Appropriate for the task: _____

_____

_____

1.21 Competent communication is honest: _____

_____

_____

✔ Teacher check _____
Initial   Date

Appropriate and Inappropriate Responses

Learning how to be a competent communicator is increased by your knowledge of how effective communication functions. For example, competent communicators recognize that there are appropriate and inappropriate responses to specific situations. As you increase your knowledge of communication, you will broaden your communication options.

Imagine a two-year-old child who knows how to use only ten words. He is limited greatly in the ways he can express himself. He might be able to ask for water, but he cannot tell his parent that he prefers the taste of

RESPONSES

• ignore
• insult
• lash out

Negative

• respond with kind words
• consider the source of the anger
• sit down and discuss the problem

Positive

cold water to water that is lukewarm or hot. All he can do is cry when he is given lukewarm water. Likewise, adults who are unaware of their communication options are limited in the ways they can express themselves. By increasing their awareness of different communication options, they can increase their potential for communication competence.

For example, there are many ways to respond to angry words from a friend or family member. Negative responses would be to:

- *ignore* the person
- *insult* the person
- *lash out* at the person

Or you could seek reconciliation, a solution agreeable to both people. With this goal in mind, you could:

- *respond* with a kind word
- *consider* what is the real source of the anger
- *ask* the other person if you could sit down with him or her and discuss the problem calmly

Unfortunately, the first list is illustrative of the communication **repertoire** many inexperienced or self-centered communicators use. Without the good communication skills available to them, they respond automatically to the emotion presented and are consequently unable to communicate successfully in a variety of situations, even if their intentions are toward reconciliation. We will talk more about conflict resolution in Unit 3.

Choosing Appropriate Behavior. Understanding what behavior is appropriate in a particular context or situation is the next step in becoming a competent communicator. Responding to anger with anger may not be the right choice to make, even if you want to communicate that you are angry. The consequences of a poor response could turn out to be worse than the initial offense.

When considering how to respond to a situation, you should judge your choice against three criteria:

- Does my choice correspond to what is true?
- Does my choice help to bring about the desired outcome?
- Does my choice take into consideration the feelings and needs of the other person?

Response Criteria

Does my choice...

- correspond to what is true?
- help to bring about the desired outcome?
- take into consideration the feelings and needs of the other person?

The answer to the first question reveals whether or not the message is an honest one. Competent communicators are honest. The second question addresses whether or not your choice is appropriate for the situation. The third question determines whether or not your choice is appropriate and good for the other person.

A number of other communication skills can be used to answer these questions. For example, listening carefully to what the other person is saying will help you determine the correct response. Listening to the other person is critical to selecting the best way to respond.

Intrapersonal communication is also an effective tool in choosing appropriate behavior. Rehearsing alternate scenarios in your mind can help you to decide which will have the best results. You might have two choices that are true, necessary, and kind; but one might be better suited for the situation.

A third communication skill that can help you make the most appropriate choice is taking the other person's perspective. By imagining how you might feel in a given situation, you may be able to determine which response is kind or necessary.

Practice, Practice, Practice. Practice—or frequent use of communication skills—will make you a more competent communicator. The way you get better is to put into practice the skills you have learned. Don't let initial failures discourage you. Continue to expand your knowledge of communication options and make careful, informed decisions on appropriate behavior. Soon you will be a more competent communicator.

Feedback. Feedback is an invaluable communication tool. When you use feedback, you watch and listen to the reactions of others, considering their response to your message. This enables you to be sensitive to how others receive your message as well as helps you to fine-tune your behavior. People who use feedback to adjust their behavior tend to be the more competent communicators.

Skill-Building Activity: Evaluating Communication Competence

1.22 **This activity is designed to allow you to observe and evaluate communication within real settings. You'll observe informal communication within a social setting, such as an interaction between friends or a conversation between family members. Each time, you'll consider whether the communication was appropriate for the situation. When we carefully examine the communication skills of others, it helps us to sharpen our own abilities to be clear and respectful communicators.**

NOTE: It may be useful to use a tape recorder for this activity. If you do, remember to get permission to record any conversations.

Complete the following steps and use your observations to answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper.

a. Observe an interaction between your friends or family members. Describe the setting and purpose of the interaction. Does it take place over dinner? At the mall? In the hallways at school? In the cafeteria? Next, describe who is doing the speaking. What is their relationship to one another? Are they friends? Classmates? Husband and wife? Siblings?

b. Pay attention to what is being said. What is the style of speech used? Is it formal or informal? Provide a few examples.

c. Consider what you've learned about appropriate and inappropriate responses. Now, think about the interaction you just observed. Did the responses seem appropriate to the situation? In other words, were they truthful, did they bring about a desired outcome, and were they kind? Provide at least one or two examples to back up your evaluation.

d. Try to identify any feedback signals. These are verbal or nonverbal responses to a message, such as eye contact, nodding, or gesturing. List any feedback signals you observed and explain how each enhanced or hindered the message.

e. Given what you know about speech styles in informal settings, would you characterize the communicators as competent in the situation you observed? Explain your answer.

Teacher check _____
Initial   Date

Review for Self Test

Read the section review that follows and look over the objectives and problems in this section to prepare for Self Test 1. If you did not complete the problems successfully or are not sure about the information that relates to each objective, review the material again.

When you are ready, take Self Test 1. The Self Test will check your understanding of this section. Any items you miss on this test will show you what areas you need to restudy.

Introduction to Communication

This lesson introduced you to the "Transactional Model" of communication. As you studied this model, you observed the components of the communication process and their functions. This model demonstrated that communication is fast-paced, interactive, and sensitive to context and culture. Having completed this lesson, you should be better prepared to:
- **Define communication, its parts, process, and functions.**
- **Describe the Transactional Model process.**

Types of Communication

In this lesson, you were introduced to five types of communication: "intrapersonal," "interpersonal," "small group," "public," and "mass" communication. You also discovered how spiritual, physical, social, practical, and personal needs affect communication. Having completed this lesson, you should be better prepared to:
- **List and define the types of communication.**
- **Describe the relationships between mass media and its audiences.**

The Importance of Communication

You learned that communication demonstrates its importance in four areas of our lives: identity, relationships, health, and work. You observed that the use and development of effective communication in these areas can provide numerous benefits and the achievement of goals. Having completed this lesson, you should be better prepared to:
- **Defend the importance of effective communication skills.**

Becoming a Competent Communicator

In this lesson, you practiced improving your communication by recognizing options and evaluating them to determine whether or not they're right and appropriate for a particular situation. Having completed this lesson, you should be better prepared to:
- **List and describe four key points that are used by competent communicators.**

Self Test 1

Complete the sentences, using words from the word list below (2 points for each blank).

appropriate	competence	feedback	kind	Transactional Model
body language	context	greater	necessary	true
communication	effectively	honest	others	

1.01   Communication _____ is the ability to interact with _____ in a manner that is _____ and _____ for the situation, the individuals involved, and the task.

1.02   The _____ determines the norms that govern interactions.

1.03   When considering how to respond to a situation, you should judge your options against three criteria:

Is it _____ ?

Is it _____ ?

Is it _____ ?

1.04   Paying close attention to _____ helps you adjust your behavior so that it is more appropriate.

1.05   The _____ demonstrates that a message can be sent and received at the same time.

1.06   **Label the missing parts of the Transactional Model (sometimes called the Communication Model) on the following list of words** (1 point each).

Channel	Decoding	Internal	Receiving	Transmitting
Context	External	Perceiving	Sending	Encoding

_____ Noise

_____ Noise

PERCEIVING

SENDING

MEANING

ENCODING

MEANING

DECODING

TRANSMITTING

RECEIVING

MESSAGE TO SENSORS
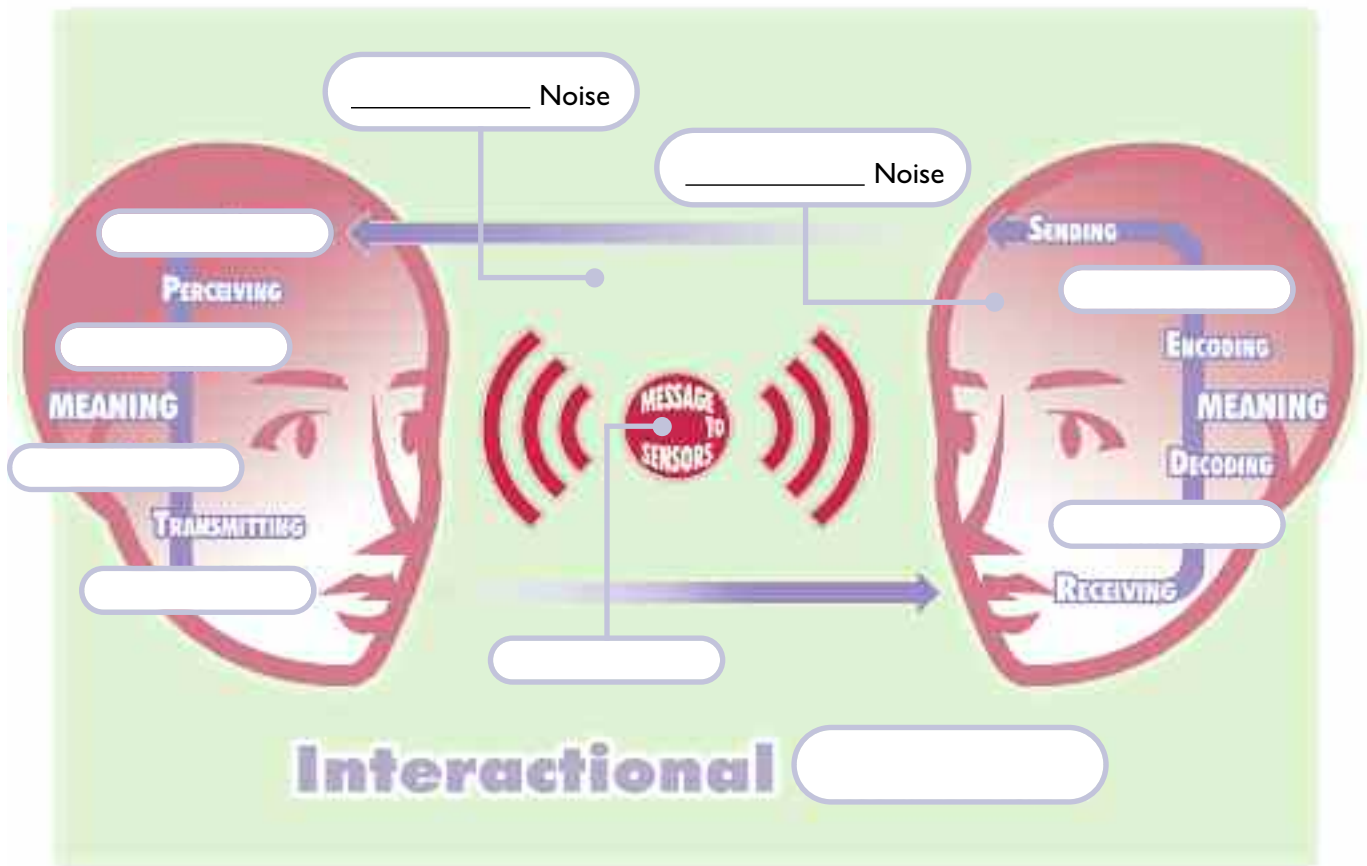
Interactional

Match the correct term from the list below with the correct statement (2 points each).

1.07   _____ a verbal or nonverbal response

1.08   _____ a systemic process in which people interact with and through symbols to discover and interpret meanings

1.09   _____ an individual involved in the communication process

1.010   _____ anything that might interfere with the communication process

1.011   _____ communication between at least two people

1.012   _____ communication used to solve problems and share ideas and experiences

1.013   _____ represent objects, ideas, processes, things, or events

1.014   _____ transmission of messages to a large audience

1.015   _____ physical or social setting of communication

1.016   _____ a process by which one person or group presents a message in a formal manner to another group

a. communication

b. context

c. feedback

d. interpersonal communication

e. mass communication

f. noise

g. public communication

h. sender-receiver

i. small group communication

j. symbols

Answer each of the following questions in one to three sentences (5 points each).

1.017 Define communication using its three factors. _____

_____

_____

1.018 Define communication competence._____

_____

_____

1.019 Name the four key points of competent communication._____

_____

_____

_____