

Business Communications 1A: Introduction

No matter what career you're planning to pursue, excellent professional communication will be key to your success. Upgrade your abilities in speaking, listening, writing, using and reading body language, and communicating in teams and groups. Discover how to plan, create, and deliver business presentations and communicate through graphics. In no time, you'll be communicating with confidence, stand out from your peers, and impress your employer.

Companion courses listed at the bottom.

Unit 1: Communicating Professionally in Today's Workplace

Just as we need water and air to support all life on Earth, communication—in various forms—is essential to support the activities of every business or not-for-profit organization. Workplace communication is what enables work to get done. In today's work environment, where many teams are now functioning virtually, communication often happens via various channels, sometimes at the same time. To succeed in the world of work, you'll need to master not just speaking and writing but also the use of an ever-increasing number of digital tools. As communication becomes more and more complex, it's also becoming increasingly important to consider the ethical implications of the way you share ideas and information with others.

What will you learn in this unit?

1. Explain communication as a process
2. Recognize barriers to effective communication
3. Describe ethical considerations in workplace communication
4. Identify ways to develop your business communication skills

Unit 2: Use Your Ears and Eyes to Tune In

When we think of communication, we tend to focus on the sending side: what we want to say and how we'll convey our meaning to our listeners or readers. We often overlook the role of our audience in interpreting, and therefore shaping, that meaning.

But the audience's part in the communication process is just as important as the sender's. In fact, the key to successful business communication is to tune in to your audience as closely as you can so you can adapt your message to their interests and level of understanding. In live conversation, active listening enables you to screen out distractions so you can hear what your audience is truly saying, through both their words and the way they use their voice. In addition, paying close attention to body language gives you additional insight into what your audience is thinking and feeling, even if they're not putting all their thoughts and feelings into words.

What will you learn in this unit?

1. Define active listening
2. Overcome barriers to active listening
3. Interpret the body language of other people
4. Use positive body language to build confidence and trust

Unit 3: Speaking Like a Professional

Imagine you've just been hired as the summer intern for a local start-up. It's your first day on the job, and as you walk into the office, with its neon-green walls and exposed ductwork, you wonder: How will I greet my

boss? That's an important question to ponder because conversation in the workplace follows certain norms (standards) that don't necessarily apply outside a professional context. Every workplace is different, but every workplace is also a professional space, where certain standards of behavior are expected. Part of mastering the art of business communication is learning to adapt to those standards. They affect all spoken communication, from informal conversations with colleagues to team meetings and formal presentations.

What will you learn in this unit?

1. Adapt your speech to your audience
2. Describe the dynamics of a productive business conversation
3. Use specific techniques to enhance your speaking
4. Participate in typical business conversations
5. Follow professional telephone etiquette

Unit 4: Communicating in Groups and Teams

The world of work depends on teamwork. Even when people perform activities that seem to be solitary, such as writing or data entry, those activities form part of a team agenda. That means one of your most important skills in the workplace will be your ability to collaborate, and a core part of collaboration is communication. Great team players understand team dynamics—the way team members serve different roles and interact with one another. They also experiment with emerging collaboration technologies, embrace diverse perspectives, and practice problem solving and innovative thinking.

What will you learn in this unit?

1. Identify roles and interaction patterns in healthy teams
2. Describe different communication channels for team collaboration
3. Recognize the advantages and challenges of working with diverse teams
4. Practice problem solving and innovative thinking as part of a team

Unit 5: Digital Exchanges

Much of the “conversation” that occurs in the run of a business day happens through written communication rather than the spoken word. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic that started in the spring of 2020, phone calls and hallway conversations were moving into email and instant messaging. Now that so much of business is conducted in a virtual space, these text-based communication tools are becoming even more important. Fortunately, many of the great speaking skills you've started to develop transfer easily into the digital realm. The key is to recognize how different media and technology tools affect messages so you can make smart, ethical communication choices.

What will you learn in this unit?

1. Compare and contrast different media used in digital exchanges
2. Identify appropriate media to use in different situations
3. Discuss the use of social media for business messaging and brand awareness
4. Describe best practices for communicating via social media
5. Recognize ethical considerations of digital communication

Unit 6: Planning Business Presentations

Spoken communication makes business happen through many informal kinds of conversation—face-to-face discussions, meetings in person or over the web, phone calls, and emails and other kinds of digital exchanges. Many business situations also involve some type of oral presentation, which is an opportunity for an individual or team to convey ideas and information in a formal, structured way. In most contexts, a business audience now expects that a presentation will include some kind of a slideshow. This complex form of verbal and visual communication tends to require a lot of preparation, often including various forms of research.

What will you learn in this unit?

1. Identify the audience, purpose, topic, and form for your presentation
2. Describe best practices for creating and delivering different kinds of online presentations
3. Conduct and document research for an oral presentation
4. Develop a three-part structure for a presentation

Unit 7: Creating Awesome Slide Decks

Fifty years ago, any young person entering the workforce was expected to know how to write a formal business letter and format it according to the conventions of the day. Now, business letters have become rare documents (unless your job involves a lot of work relating to contracts or other legal matters), and employers have a whole new set of expectations concerning communication. They'll assume you know how to use a suite of electronic communication tools, including slide presentation software. To craft compelling slide decks, you must learn to think like a graphic designer so that you present your ideas and information through visuals as well as words.

What will you learn in this unit?

1. Create an outline for a slide deck using storyboarding
2. Explain what data visualization is and its role in business communication
3. Apply basic principles of visual design to slides
4. Enhance slide presentations by incorporating advanced features, such as multimedia elements

Unit 8: Delivering a Presentation

Delivering a business presentation requires you to draw on a range of communication skills. Like an actor on the stage or a politician at the podium, you're delivering prepared content with artistic effect. But there's much more to giving a presentation than speechifying. In the business context, "presenting" also includes interacting with the audience. Depending on the situation, that might mean engaging with the audience throughout the presentation or taking questions at the end. Either way, becoming an effective business presenter involves practicing various interpersonal skills, such as active listening, nonverbal communication, and conversation.

What will you learn in this unit?

1. Complete the mental and technical preparation necessary to deliver a presentation
2. Engage a live audience through appealing to their emotions and using an interesting presentation style
3. Deliver compelling online presentations
4. Present yourself effectively to an interview audience

Companion courses:

Principles of Business, Marketing, Finance

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