PART 1 Making Connections through Communication

1 Connecting Process and Principles
THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP YOU

1. **Define** communication.
2. **Identify** four reasons for studying communication.
3. **Explain** the fundamental principles of communication.
4. **Define** the essential components in the communication process.
5. **Differentiate** the various types of communication: intrapersonal, interpersonal (including group), public, mass, and communication via social media.
6. **Differentiate** social media from face-to-face communication.
7. **Summarize** five common myths about communication.

Making Everyday Connections

President Barack Obama is said to have forever changed the nature of political campaigning as well as communication by and with a president of the United States. Obama’s campaign made extensive use of YouTube, blogs, tweets through Twitter, and other tools on the Internet. His charismatic appeal drew in young people by the thousands, and they, too, added to the use and appeal of technology in staying connected with others. In addition, the president’s heavy reliance on his BlackBerry challenged his security team to find a way for him to use the BlackBerry without compromising his safety or national security. President Obama is a prime example of someone immersed in our connected world. He acknowledges that he and other individuals are highly dependent on social media to communicate and connect in everyday life.

Most students and faculty members are among the groups of people who use the Internet to stay connected with family, friends, and others. At the end of December 2011, Facebook reported that it surpassed 845 million monthly active users. Approximately 80% of those monthly active users were outside the United States and Canada. Available in more than 70 languages, Facebook also reported that 425 million monthly active users used the social network’s mobile applications on their smartphones and other digital devices. The International Association for the Wireless Telecommunications Industry notes that, as of June 2006, 10.5% of U.S. households were “wireless-only households”—meaning the family abandoned its landline telephone and used only cell phones. In June 2011, the Association estimated that 31.6% of U.S. households completely eliminated their landline telephones. Furthermore, the Association stated that 196.9 billion text messages were sent in June 2011 alone. The total number of text messages sent in 2011 amounted to over 2.12 trillion. Where will this communication lead? And how will it affect each of us as communicators?

**Questions To Think About**

1. How much time do you spend texting, on Twitter or Facebook, or with some other form of social media?
2. What different forms of communication do you use on a given day?
3. How much time do you spend listening to others?
4. Can you explain the characteristics of an effective communicator?
5. What public figures are effective communicators? Why?
6. How often do you think about how effectively you communicate with others face-to-face and through social media?
Chapter 1  Connecting Process and Principles

Communication: Making Connections

We live in a connected world. Everywhere we look we see someone talking on a cell phone or listening to an iPod or MP3 player. At work and for our studies, we are connected to the Internet. The Internet is the source of information on every aspect of our lives, from resources for class papers and presentations, to emails that allow us to contact our professors, to Facebook, which allows us to present ourselves in the ways we choose and to connect with our friends and family. In our free time, we are linked to the Internet, TV, cell phones, music, or video games. Life is a series of connections, mediated or face-to-face. Despite these connections, we don’t really reflect much on how we make and maintain them. Communication is something we take for granted. We talk—therefore, we communicate. But just because we can talk, can we really communicate effectively? What is competent communication? For our purposes, communication competence is the ability to take part in effective communication that is characterized by skills and understandings that enable communicators to exchange messages successfully.

Communication helps us make connections with each other and with the world. We communicate daily with many people in a variety of situations. We listen to professors, employers, coworkers, family members, friends, and many others every hour. We continually text our friends and family. Facebook allows us to tell the world how we’re feeling and connect with others whether close or distant. Twitter provides a way to stay socially linked in 140 characters or less. Whatever your cultural background, learning style, or geographical location, you’ll find that your communication proficiency can mean greater academic success, improved relationships, a better job, and greater satisfaction in your life.

When you stop to really think about a typical day in your life, you’ll discover that you spend a lot of time making connections. And, you’ll realize that communication allows you to make those connections. Communication takes many forms and you, as a communicator, must have a wide range of behaviors that will allow you to adapt to the various situations in which you find yourself. In this text, we provide a variety of ideas and approaches to help you learn more about the exciting ways people make connections through communication. This chapter presents the concepts and processes of effective communication in everyday life. We examine the essential components and principles, the types and contexts, and the myths about communication. You will have the opportunity to think about the role of communication in an increasingly multicultural and technological world. We will differentiate face-to-face communication from that occurring via social media. We’ll provide hands-on activities and reflective questions to apply to your personal life and to use communication to make connections in all areas of your life.

What Is Communication?

What is communication? And what do we mean when we say that communication occurs? How do we know when we have communicated effectively? How do we use communication to make connections in our lives? The answers to these questions...
require an understanding of the principles and process of communication as well as some guidelines for achieving success.

Generally, we can say that communication is a process that allows us to share and create meaning. More formally, we define communication as the simultaneous sharing and creating of meaning through human symbolic interaction. It might seem obvious but bears repeating: Communication is complex. If it were simple, people would have few difficulties with it, and we would not need to study it! This complex and challenging process, however, is critical to making connections in all of our relationships, from the professional to the romantic and everything in between.

Communication as a discipline has existed for thousands of years. Scholars in ancient Greece and Rome recognized communication as a powerful means of influence. Classical rhetoricians studied the principles of effectively composing and delivering persuasive speeches. In the Middle Ages in Western Europe, such religious leaders as St. Augustine developed written and spoken communication, including letter writing and preaching, to spread the Christian faith. In the Western world, public speaking, storytelling, and debating have been important means of changing public opinion and persuading others to take political action. African, Eastern, and Middle Eastern cultures, too, have long emphasized the importance of effective communication. According to intercultural communication scholars Samovar and Porter, “the Buddha advised his disciples to avoid ‘harsh speech.’” Communication colleagues in Japan, Korea, and Malaysia confirm that the study of communication is an ancient and valued tradition in their cultures. Well-known practitioners of this art include Barack Obama, Condoleezza Rice, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Abraham Lincoln, Mother Teresa, Eleanor Roosevelt, Oprah Winfrey, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, Winston Churchill, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mao Tse-tung, and Colin Powell.

Communication is central to our ideas of a “good” life. Communication is even identified as a way to make the world a better, safer place. In the United States numerous public figures are identified as competent communicators. Presidents Barack Obama, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt have been known as effective communicators. Reagan, on leaving the presidency, reportedly said, “I’ve been called The Great Communicator. If I am it’s because I have great things to communicate.” Media figures Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres, and Dr. Phil have award-winning talk shows that draw large audiences because each knows how to connect with people. Think about these examples and then answer the following questions:

1. What qualities do you think “great communicators” have?
2. Do the seven people identified above have any communication characteristics in common? What are they?
3. How do you think the ability to communicate effectively made a difference in the lives of these public figures?
4. Which people in your life do you consider to be effective communicators? Why are they effective?

Compare and discuss your answers and reasons with others in your class or in your workplace. How many on your list were on the lists of others? Were their reasons similar to yours?
Chapter 1  Connecting Process and Principles

According to the definition used in this text, communication involves a range of behaviors and occurs in a variety of situations: public and private, business and social, home and school, formal and informal. The diverse situations are all linked by one common thread—human symbolic interaction, or people using a symbol system (language) to share thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, customs, and ideas. As you read this text, you will learn about human symbolic interaction as it occurs within and among individuals, groups, organizations, cultures, and cocultures. You will discover more about the nature of the communication process: listening, thinking, speaking in public settings, speaking in small-group settings, and speaking with one, two, or a small number of people in your interpersonal relationships. Your ability to communicate by using speech will be one of the determining factors in your success in the classroom, in the workplace, and in your personal life. Being an effective communicator saves time, makes life more enjoyable, allows people to establish and maintain relationships successfully, and facilitates accomplishing personal goals.

Why Should We Study Communication?

Although you have communicated for many years, you probably have not had the opportunity to learn about communication competence. The ability to communicate might seem natural because, unless disabilities are present, most of us readily develop speaking skills. But the ability to communicate (not simply to utter words) is learned; the process of becoming a competent communicator is a difficult, lifelong project. You can make progress quickly, however, if you work hard to learn the principles and concepts and then apply them in everyday situations. These skills will enable you to reap benefits in career development, ethical behavior, and the promotion of positive relationships among people of diverse cultural backgrounds. We live in a time of rapid technological change. Put simply, effective communication is critical to living successfully in today's society.

Communication and Our Technological Society

Can you remember a time when you did not rely on some form of technology to communicate? Your answer to this question is most likely a definite “no.” Even if you reflect back to when you were an infant, your parents may have placed a two-way baby monitor by your crib to alert them when you started crying. In many ways, that two-way monitor was probably your first interaction with the rapidly developing world of communication and technology. Today, the baby monitor is gone, but you rely on a host of technological tools to remain connected with the people in your life. We use social media—highly accessible technologies that facilitate communication, interaction, and connection with others.

The way technology has sped the pace of communication adds to the challenge of both presenting and receiving meaningful messages. We use social media to remain connected with others in our social network—a group of individuals...
who are connected by friendship, family, common interests, beliefs, or knowledge. Our social networks are now larger than ever. Take a look at Figure 1.1. The evolution of technology is depicted along this continuum. In the mid-1800s to mid-1900s, people likely had simple social networks made up of close friends and family they saw on a regular basis and others with whom they connected via postal mail or maybe a rare telephone call. When the first telephone call was made in the late 1800s, families and friends were likely quite excited because they were now better able to remain connected with others. Notice the large gaps between important points on the first half of the continuum. Technology was evolving, but at a slow rate. Now, look at the points on the right half of the continuum. Since the first communication satellite (Telstar 1) was launched in 1962 and the first cell phone call was made in 1973, technology has evolved at a rapid rate. In the span of a few short years, the first text message was sent, Google entered the Internet scene, and Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Twitter emerged as popular social media outlets.

Now, our social networks are significantly more complex than those of our ancestors. We rely heavily on Facebook to remain connected with our friends across the country and the world; we text our friends to check in and maybe make plans for later in the day; we access YouTube for those informative and sometimes hilarious videos (we may even post some ourselves); we update the world (our followers) through “tweets” on Twitter; we may get breaking news alerts on our iPhones or other smartphones. Perhaps most fascinating, we can do all of these things in a matter of seconds from our desktop computers, our laptops, and even our cell phones. These social media may constitute the bulk of what we use to practice communication. No matter where we are, we are plugged into our social networks and what is happening in the world.

Social media often make it possible for us to experience historic events just moments after they occur, sometimes even while they are occurring. Memorable images are frequently repeated courtesy of modern technology. President Obama’s famous “Yes We Can” video, which rallied voters, and the 2008 election-night multimedia victory speech he gave to thousands of supporters in Chicago’s Grant Park are two examples of being able to experience news as it happens anywhere in the world. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and tornadoes on the news bring others’ devastation into our homes. We use digital cameras on our computers or cell phones and send images or visit face-to-face with people around the globe. If you happen to be in the right place at the right time, witnessing a news event or simply crossing the path of a reporter in search of a story or a curious individual with a cell phone camera, your image, words, or voice may be instantaneously transmitted to your community, the nation, or the world.
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Figure 1.1 The Evolution of Social Media

Notice the large gaps between the important points on the first half of the continuum. Technology was evolving, but at a slow rate. As the points on the right half of the continuum illustrate, technology has rapidly evolved in recent years.

The sheer volume of communication presented through electronic media can seem overwhelming. How does the competent communicator choose the appropriate channel and materials from among many options? What does technology do to the quality of one's messages? Do social media harm or help the quality of interactions? These questions and answers are some you will need to address, and this text will provide guidelines and ideas to help with that. Developments in social media are exciting because they increase avenues of communication and make the process quick and easy. Those who take time to learn and practice the principles of sound communication will best utilize social media to develop and maintain connections with others.

Communication and Career Development

Most of us aspire to succeed in our chosen careers. We enter college to better ourselves and prepare for satisfying jobs. Communication plays an important role in career success. Leaders in education, business, and industry have identified several life skills critical to success in the workforce, and communication is one of the most valued areas of expertise. For example, several recent studies reinforce what previous research had already shown: Employers want workers at all levels who know how to communicate and relate to others both verbally and in writing. They want workers who work well in groups and teams and exhibit strong analytical, problem solving,
and computer/technical skills. And finally employers want workers who are flexible and able to adapt to new situations on the job and demand a strong work ethic and initiative.

In other words, effective workplace communicators can explain ideas clearly and give good directions. Effective communicators are good listeners who work harmoniously with others and represent their companies well in small and large group settings. Too often, employers believe these skills are lacking in their employees. Introductory courses in communication, such as the one to which this text is geared, focus on these skills.

Personnel directors have described their needs regarding prospective employees as follows: Send me people who know how to speak, listen, and think, and I’ll do the rest. I can train people in their specific job responsibilities, as long as they listen attentively, know how to think, and can express themselves well. In fact, most careers involve contact with others and require the ability to communicate effectively with them. Business and industry often look for the most competent communicators when they hire new employees. Although some companies provide on-the-job training in communication skills, it is most advantageous to develop excellent speaking, listening, and analytical abilities before applying for the exciting job that could launch or enhance your career.

Effective social media skills are vital for professional success. In fact, many employers and college professors acknowledge the ease of communication and access to
information offered by these media. At the same time, some of those same people decry the poor spelling and damage done to the quality of both written and oral messages. For text messages “gr8” is fine. Using that kind of message in work-related reports, memos, emails, or class papers, however, may result in lower grades, demotions, or job loss. While some research suggests that communication through social media is as effective at building and maintaining relationships, given enough time, other research indicates that it reduces social skills, harms society, and generally interferes with face-to-face communication. Perhaps you share personal information via Facebook that you otherwise might not share face-to-face, but this is a double-edged sword in that employers search social networking sites to learn more about future employees and, on that basis, have been known to rescind interviews and job offers. Facebook or MySpace page content has cost some employees their jobs. This text will suggest how to effectively use social media in your personal and professional life.

MAKING CONNECTIONS
FOR SUCCESS

Do You Tweet?

Oprah Winfrey gained more than 130,000 followers in less than a day. President Obama tweeted the words, “We just made history” on the night of his election. It was a tweeted image that first captured the forced landing of US Airways flight 1549 in the Hudson River. Biz Stone and Evan Williams conceived of Twitter as a basic communication tool providing social networking applications. It has grown into one of the “world’s most valuable real-time information caches.” Twitter has now evolved into a powerful new marketing and communication tool. Regional emergency preparedness organizations are looking at Twitter as a way to reach millions of people during a disaster. NASA is using it to regularly update interested parties about the status of space shuttle flights. A Manhattan bakery tweets when warm cookies come out of the oven. Most of us cannot begin to imagine life without the gadgets and the instant access we have to everyone and everything. We can have a Facebook profile and present what we want to the world. Your college may require you to create an ePortfolio for your job search. LinkedIn allows you to make contacts with people in your profession or those in the profession to which you aspire. It can help you get recommendations as well as networking possibilities. Facebook was initially created for college students but is now populated by people of all ages (including your authors) who use this to maintain connections with friends and colleagues both near and far. With that in mind, answer the following questions and share them with friends/classmates to compare your stories.

1. Do you tweet? When? Why?
2. Have you or a friend ever experienced a cyber relationship? How did the relationship develop?
3. What rules did you and your friend follow in establishing and maintaining this relationship?
4. What concerns do you have about this kind of relationship? Why?
5. Did anyone ever attempt to monitor or stop your use of the Internet? How? For what reasons?
6. How is communication through social media easier or more difficult than face-to-face communication with family and friends?
7. Do you have a Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn account? How and for what do you use each?
In the surveys cited in the text, executives indicated that all employees need to improve their communication skills. The executives also noted that greater flexibility and higher ethical standards should be a focus of career preparation. If a prospective employer asked you the following questions, how would you respond?

1. Are you an effective communicator at work? Why? Why not?
2. What are five of your workplace communication concerns?
3. What anxieties about communication do you have? (James McCroskey and his colleagues developed the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension [PRCA] to help identify the strength of your communication anxiety. You can complete a PRCA by logging onto MyCommunication.com. Try a web search on communication apprehension and complete a PRCA found on the web. We discuss communication apprehension more fully in the public speaking section.)
4. What areas of communication do you need to improve at work? How do you know you need to work on these areas?
5. Describe one instance in which you found yourself wishing that you were a better listener at work.
6. What were you doing the last time you found yourself wishing you were a better communicator? What did you mean by the term?
7. In what recent situations did you find yourself wondering how to be more effective in workplace relationships?

Employers want workers who can speak effectively, listen carefully and efficiently, and think critically. Strong communication skills are vital to today’s global workplace.

**Making Connections for Success**

*Your Communication Effectiveness in the Workplace*

In the surveys cited in the text, executives indicated that all employees need to improve their communication skills. The executives also noted that greater flexibility and higher ethical standards should be a focus of career preparation. If a prospective employer asked you the following questions, how would you respond?

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6. What were you doing the last time you found yourself wishing you were a better communicator? What did you mean by the term?
7. In what recent situations did you find yourself wondering how to be more effective in workplace relationships?
All societies hold certain ethical standards—ideals about what is right and what is wrong—and unethical behavior often carries a penalty. **Ethics** refers to an individual's system of moral principles. People have been removed from political office, lost their jobs, or been publicly chastised for violating ethical standards and codes. Such behaviors often involve unethical acts related to communication. Consider former New York Congressman Anthony Weiner. In May 2011, Weiner sent via Twitter a sexually suggestive photograph of himself to a 21-year-old woman. For days, the congressman denied the allegations until he admitted to his unethical use of social media during a planned news conference. His credibility as an honorable public servant now tarnished, Weiner resigned from Congress. As an additional example, financiers have received prison terms for participating in insider trading—using illegally obtained information to make money on the stock market. Sharing such information constitutes an illegal act of communication. Another unethical behavior is telling lies, whether done to hurt someone else or to protect or enhance one’s own position. Though politicians spring to mind as typical offenders in this category, the problem is more widespread: for instance, enhancing one’s résumé to increase the chances of being hired or “borrowing” a friend’s old term paper or speech to pass a course.

Sometimes people think they need to find so-called shortcuts to accomplish tasks, whether they involve questionable accounting procedures in business, insider trading to keep more money, or stealing ideas to complete a presentation or paper. **Plagiarism** is the use of another person’s information, language, or ideas without citing the originator and making it appear that the user is the originator. Technology allows us to find and use all kinds of information, but it also presents new ethical dilemmas. Technology may tempt us to use someone else’s work or perhaps information that hasn’t been carefully screened or evaluated for authenticity or truthfulness. A quick search of the Internet provides numerous sources for A, B, or even C papers for a “minimal cost” and “minimal risks to you.” While those papers can save time and effort, they can also cost you a passing grade, or even a diploma from your institution.

The Internet creates more opportunity for plagiarism because of easy access to information. So many sites exist, with so much information, that people often believe they can go to a site, take what they want, and never be caught. Plagiarism, in whatever form, is still unethical; and just as it has consequences in educational institutions, in the workplace, plagiarism and other unethical behaviors can result in a demotion or even job loss.

Ethical communicators speak responsibly and give credit to any sources that contribute to the message being conveyed. An ethical communicator does not plagiarize and does not lie. Aristotle, a Greek rhetorician (384–322 B.C.), suggested that communication was most powerful when the speaker’s character, or **ethos** (ethical appeal), was engaged in presenting the truth.¹⁰ (Chapter 10 further develops this concept.) Quintilian (A.D. ca. 35–ca. 100), another rhetorician, stated (before the days of inclusive language) that communication needed presentation by “a good man speaking well.”¹¹

An important distinction to make here is that unethical communication may, in fact, constitute effective communication. If one person persuades another to do something morally wrong, the communication has been effective, but it is not virtuous. Unethical communication should never be condoned, even when it has
Why Should We Study Communication?

Every few weeks we hear examples of unethical behavior. Rod Blagojevich, former Illinois governor, was arrested for political corruption, impeached, and removed from office because he tried to sell Barack Obama’s vacant U.S. Senate seat. In 2011, Blagojevich was sentenced to 14 years in federal prison. In what some labeled a mockery of the system, he appointed former Illinois Attorney General Roland Burris to the seat. After being seated in the Senate, Burris admitted he hosted fund-raising activities for the governor and had been asked for money. In several other cases, once-respected financiers were convicted of bilking scores of investors of billions of dollars. Bernard Madoff is now serving a 150-year prison sentence for his elaborate Ponzi schemes to part people and their money. A number of President Obama’s cabinet nominees were forced to remove their names from contention because they failed to pay taxes or they received money from people who at least seemed to receive favorable contracts after making generous donations to election campaign funds. These examples demonstrate some of the risks created by failing to meet ethical standards.

1. Where do we get our views of ethics?
2. What are your own views of ethical behaviors?
3. What specific behaviors violate your ethical code to the point that you would have to confront someone if he or she acted in a certain way?
5. What other examples of ethical violations currently or recently in the news can you identify?
6. What policies does your college or university have in place for plagiarism and/or breaches of ethics?
7. What are the penalties for such behavior?

appeared to succeed. We need a good deal of critical thinking in our attempt to be effective and ethical communicators who evaluate others’ communication to determine its ethical content.

Today, many colleges and universities offer or require ethics classes to encourage students to take ethical responsibilities seriously and to remind them that the need for responsible, ethical behavior pervades all aspects of life. Throughout this text, examples of ethical dilemmas and perspectives will help you become aware of the need for ethical communication behaviors.

Communication and Our Multicultural Society

Job transfers, changes in economic and political conditions, and numerous other factors cause people to move from place to place, often leaving their country of birth to put down roots elsewhere. Many countries are experiencing an increase in this trend. In the United States, for example, the population that was once characterized by a white majority with European roots is now a diverse mosaic comprising people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In this environment, we can grow to appreciate the distinctions that make each culture unique as well as the interconnectedness shared by all, sometimes described as the “global village.” But a great deal of knowledge, flexibility, and sensitivity is necessary if people of diverse cultural backgrounds are to communicate successfully and live well together.
Chapter 1  Connecting Process and Principles

Current demographic trends and projections in the United States create the necessity to interact successfully with people of all racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious heritages. See Table 1.1 for the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau report about the demographic breakdown by race (all ages).

This translates to roughly the following 2010 percentages: 72 percent of the population is white; 13 percent, black or African American; 5 percent, Asian; and 1 percent, American Indian. Projections from the Census Bureau suggest a significant increase in Hispanic, black, and Asian numbers in the near future, with a decline or stable percentage for whites. The changes in “how we look” are already occurring in elementary schools and high schools, as well as college and university classrooms. Language differences complicate communication within many schools. Some kindergarten through twelfth grade schools on the East and West Coasts, as well as in other such populous areas as Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, and St. Louis, have students that represent 50 to 100 or more different native languages. College and university classrooms, too, have increasing numbers of students whose first language is not English, and each one’s cultural and ethnic background affects the way these students communicate in the classroom, the residence hall, the supermarket, and the workplace.

Language structure itself influences and is influenced by culture. Nonverbal communication behaviors, such as physical stance, eye contact, and style of speaking, are also largely determined by cultural background. It takes a great deal of patience, understanding, and respect to learn to communicate effectively in situations involving different language backgrounds and different social and conversational customs. Thus, it is important to discover all we can about the backgrounds of the people with whom we relate at school, at work, or in the community; to consider how our own customs might seem unusual to a person of a different heritage; and to cultivate an open mind and a good sense of humor. These attitudes will facilitate communication and enrich our lives.

Table 1.1  U.S. Population by Race (2000 and 2010)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Population Numbers in 2000</th>
<th>Population Numbers in 2010</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Race:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...White</td>
<td>274,595,678</td>
<td>299,736,465</td>
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<tr>
<td>...Black or African American</td>
<td>211,460,626</td>
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<tr>
<td>...American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>34,658,190</td>
<td>38,929,319</td>
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<tr>
<td>...Asian</td>
<td>2,475,956</td>
<td>2,932,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>10,242,998</td>
<td>14,674,252</td>
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<tr>
<td>...Some Other Race</td>
<td>398,835</td>
<td>540,013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>6,826,228</td>
<td>9,009,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>281,421,906</td>
<td>308,745,538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.
Principles of Communication

To appreciate the true nature of communication, it is important to understand four fundamental principles:

1. Communication is a process.
2. Communication is a system.
3. Communication is transactional.
4. Communication can be intentional or unintentional.

These principles apply readily to life beyond the classroom (and they improve interactions within the classroom as well). No doubt, situations from your personal life—family relationships, work experiences, or your participation in sports teams, music groups, social clubs, or political or community action organizations—will come to mind as we discuss the dynamics of communication. An understanding of these principles should make a difference in your life, building greater understanding and cooperation into relationships at any level.

Communication Is a Process

Communication is considered a process because it involves a series of actions that has no beginning or end and is constantly changing. Communication also involves variables that can never be duplicated. The interrelationships among people, environments, skills, attitudes, status, experiences, and feelings all determine communication at any given moment. Think about a relationship you developed with someone recently. How did it occur? It may have happened by chance (striking up a conversation with someone you met while walking to class), or it may have been a prearranged meeting (a business meeting with a prospective client). No two relationships are developed in the same way. And, like the weather, some relationships are warm while others are cool.

Communication is both ever changing and capable of effecting change. Saying something you wish you hadn’t said is an excellent example of this principle. No matter how hard you try to take back your comment, you cannot. It made its impact and has, in all likelihood, affected your relationship with another person in some way. The change might not be immediate or significant, but it does happen as a result of your communication.

Furthermore, communication and the changes it produces might not have a clearly identifiable beginning or end. Certain events led up to it, and as we noted, results will follow in its wake. Communication generally is not characterized by abrupt endings and beginnings; rather, it takes place within a flow. If you were to stop in midconversation and walk away, that conversation would still affect you; it would not end. You would carry away some new information or at least a general impression, whether positive or negative. Understanding that communication is a process will enable you to see how events and relationships constantly change, yet also have continuity.

Communication Is a System

Simply stated, a system is a combination of parts interdependently acting to form a whole. The human body is an excellent example of a system. All parts of the body are
interdependent and work together to form one complex system. If something is not functioning correctly, some response usually occurs either to correct what has gone wrong or to warn that something is going wrong. When you have a headache, it affects not only your head but also the rest of your body. You may find that you have trouble seeing and even walking. You may not wish to eat because your head pain seems to have taken over your body. If your headache is severe, you may experience trouble thinking clearly. You may also have difficulty explaining something to your coworkers or friends. Because all parts of the system are connected, your inability to think clearly, speak lucidly, or listen carefully leads to ineffective communication.

Systems also exist in the workplace, in the family, and in the classroom. If your supervisor had a fight at home, that event may affect his or her relationship with the workers; the supervisor may be irritable and snap at you and others. Although you don’t know what has caused the irritability, it does affect all who must deal with it. In other words, the supervisor’s fight at home has an impact not only on the home system but also on the system at work. In a similar sense, the communication process is a system and occurs only when the necessary components interact. If components of communication malfunction or are absent, communication is prevented or ineffective.

**Communication Is Transactional**

Communication is often viewed as a highly complex and transactional process—the simultaneous sending (encoding) and receiving (decoding) of messages. To best understand the transactional nature of communication, it is useful to compare it with the related ideas of action and interaction. If we view communication as strictly action, we would consider a source who sends a message to a receiver or audience. An action perspective does not consider the reaction from the receiver. Early communication research suggested that communication was as simple as injecting receivers with our messages. If we think about communication from an interaction perspective, we consider not only the source’s message but the receiver’s reaction as well. Such a view marked a clear step forward in our concept of communication. The interaction perspective explains that communication is not a simple one-way process. An example of communication as an interaction is a phone conversation between Chris and John. Chris speaks and John listens, then John speaks and Chris listens, and so on. Each message is a separate action. Even though a reaction to each sent message does occur, the reaction and message are not simultaneous.

Most face-to-face communication does not occur as a series of distinctly separate actions. Today, nearly all communication scholars view communication as a transactional process. Much like the interaction view, the transactional perspective considers the listener’s reaction to our message, but goes further and explains how people simultaneously act as speaker and listener in communication situations. In any given interaction, people talk, offer feedback, and respond as each person contributes through constant participation. Consider an interaction between a professor and the student she suspects has committed plagiarism. If we view communication as an interaction, we would look first at what the professor says, then consider what the student says, then examine what the professor says, and so on. However, if we view the exchange as a transaction, we would look simultaneously at the professor and the student. The professor may vary the content or tone of the conversation on the basis of the student’s nonverbal behaviors. Simultaneously, the student may respond to the professor’s communication cues by changing his behavior.
Without simultaneous actions, the communication transaction would be extremely limited, like sending a letter to someone and then having to wait a week or two for a response. In face-to-face communication, each person affects the other and shares in the process simultaneously. When you’re emailing or texting someone, unlike in face-to-face communication, you are both sender and receiver, but not simultaneously. The lag time can be frustrating because you have to wait a bit to respond. The advantage is that the written message helps you follow the flow of ideas. The principle of transaction is more fully depicted in Figure 1.2.

The transactional nature of communication also considers the context or the setting in which interaction takes place. Not only do participants constantly influence each other, but the communication context also affects how they interact. For instance, a funny comment made by friends in the school cafeteria can take on a very different meaning in a professional work setting. In many ways, our understanding of the transactional nature of communication highlights the complexity of communication and enhances our competence to effectively interact with others.

**Communication Can Be Intentional or Unintentional**

When one person communicates with another, he or she intends that specific messages with specific purposes and meanings be received. Communication can occur, however, regardless of whether it is intended. **Intentional communication** is a message that is purposely sent to a specific receiver. **Unintentional communication** is a message that is not intended to be sent or was not intended for the individual who received it. On the basis of intent or lack of intent, four possible communication situations can occur, as illustrated in Figure 1.3. This is shown by Arrow 1 and is generally the way communication takes place. Arrow 2 indicates a situation in which a person unintentionally communicates something to someone who is intentionally
Chapter 1 Connecting Process and Principles

trying to receive a message or messages. This situation occurs every time someone reads more into a communication act than was intended by the source. For example, when a work supervisor frowns at everyone and generally speaks abruptly whenever anyone addresses her, the employees immediately begin to attribute meanings to her behavior. One worker may believe that the business has economic problems and his position is at risk. Another might believe that she has done something wrong and is going to face discipline for her behavior. A third person decides that the supervisor had an argument with her husband and is taking it out on everyone at work. In reality, the supervisor actually had a headache and did not intend to communicate anything negative about the job, but others read meaning into her behavior, and she may have to explain her actions.

Arrow 3 illustrates the opposite situation. Here the source intends to send a message, but the person for whom the message is intended is not consciously or intentionally receiving it. Such a situation happens in the classroom when students daydream while the instructor is lecturing.

Arrow 4 shows that communication can be unintentional for both the source and the receiver and can occur without anyone intentionally sending or receiving a message. Communication that is not intended, or that is at least not consciously sent and received, is usually nonverbal. For example, the clothing a person wears might not be worn to communicate any specific message, and persons observing the clothing might not intentionally or consciously receive any message through it, but
they do see it. Thus, communication occurs even though neither the person nor the observer has any intention of communicating. Think of a time when you received a message not intended for you and you were upset by your interpretation. Why were you upset?

**Essential Components of Communication**

Although no exhaustive list of the myriad components of communication has been compiled, eight of the most basic elements are worth examining in detail:

1. Source/Sender
2. Message
3. Interference/Noise
4. Channel
5. Receiver
6. Feedback
7. Environment
8. Context

Figure 1.4 illustrates how these components interact when two people are communicating, yet it depicts each element’s movement and interdependence on the other elements only in a limited way. During actual communication, these components are constantly in flux as the communicators react to each other. The model also shows that communication is a process, that the components work together as a system, that
interaction and transaction are both possible modes of communication, and that intentional and unintentional communication can occur—thus illustrating the principles of communication we have already discussed.

Now that you can see how these elements relate during communication, we will discuss each one separately.

**Source/Sender**

The source is the creator of the message. Because communication usually involves more than one person, more than one source can exist at one time. In the model in Figure 1.4, both persons function as a source. Likewise, both the teacher and the students in a classroom can function as sources, sending messages simultaneously to one another—teacher to students, students to teacher, and students to students.

The communication source performs four roles: He or she determines the meaning of what is to be communicated, encodes the meaning into a message, sends the message, and perceives and reacts to a listener’s response to the message. James, when acting as source, also brings into play the communicative skills, knowledge, attitudes, and sociocultural background that make him a unique individual. No two communicators are identical in their abilities to communicate, nor do they see others, events, or situations in exactly the same way. The greater the differences between James and Maggie, the more effort and skill it will take for James to effectively communicate with Maggie. Respecting another person’s views, even when they differ from one’s own, is the first step to communicating well in such situations.
DETERMINING MEANINGS. The meaning behind the message determines how you’ll create the message. Your word choices and tone of voice, as well as other, nonverbal behaviors, will help convey your meaning to those with whom you communicate and will require careful choices on your part. When you tell your friends you’re going to Belize for spring break, you have to choose the ultimate intended meaning. Do you want them to be excited for you? Do you want them to be jealous? Do you want them to ask about going along? Or do you wish to let them know about the good deal on travel and lodging? Or perhaps you just want to express your pleasure about this destination. How do you choose words and behavior to do that?

ENCODING. Once a source has chosen a meaning, she or he encodes it. In other words, a source translates the thoughts or feelings into words, sounds, and physical expressions, which make up the actual message to be sent. According to symbolic interactionism, a theory created by sociologist George Herbert Mead and his students, the most human and humanizing activity people engage in is talking with one another. Our conversations with others, our participation in the communication process in social settings, allow us to construct meaning. For example, the postal carrier rings your doorbell and asks you to sign for a package. Without looking at the return address, you tell her you’ve been anxiously waiting for your new laptop to arrive. Symbolic interactionism also explains that we talk to ourselves (intrapersonal communication) as we sort through difficult circumstances, solve problems, and make decisions.

SENDING. The source then sends the message, which involves the source’s ability to communicate overtly, that is, to use voice and body to express the intended meaning accurately. For example, if your internal meaning is to tell the other person how pleased you are to go to Belize for spring break, you must use words and actions to illustrate what you are feeling and thinking.

REACTING. Finally, a source must interpret the receiver’s response to the message. A source’s perception of a receiver’s response in most communication situations is simultaneous with the response. For example, the person you are telling about your trip to Belize will send you messages (smiles, nods of the head, eye contact) as you speak, in reaction to what you are saying. If you interpret that response as positive, you will probably continue to tell more about your trip.

**Message**

A message is the communication produced by the source. Messages are composed of words, grammar, organization of thoughts, physical appearance, body movement, voice, aspects of the person’s personality and self-concept, and personal style. Environment and noise can also shape the message. Any stimulus that affects a receiver is a message from the source, regardless of whether the source intended to send it. Hence, if you ask a frowning friend what is wrong and the friend says, “Oh, nothing,” you’re sure to believe that there really is something wrong. The frown communicates that the words and actions do not fit together, and you’re more likely to believe the frown than the words. Your friend may not want to discuss anything with you, but you still attach meaning to all that occurs.

Remember, each message is unique. Even if the same message were to be created over and over again, it would differ in each instance because messages cannot be repeated or received in exactly the same way or in the same context. To illustrate this,
imagine reading the headline “The World Has Been Invaded by Small Green People!” in a comic book and then in your local newspaper. Although the words might be the same, the messages conveyed would be quite different.

**INTERFERENCE/NOISE.** Anything that changes the meaning of an intended message is called interference. It is included in our model because it is present, to one degree or another, in every communication environment.

Interference can be external and physical, such as noise caused by the slamming of a door, someone talking on a cell phone, or the blasting of a stereo. Other examples of external interference include an unpleasant environment, such as a smoke-filled room or a room that is too cool or too hot; an odor, such as that of overly strong perfume; or distracting characteristics of the speaker, such as too much makeup, a speech impediment, talk that is too fast or too slow, mumbling pronunciation, or weird clothing.

Interference can also be internal and psychological. For example, thoughts going through a person’s mind can interfere with the reception or creation of a message. A person who speaks in a loud voice to get someone’s attention may create both physical and psychological interference. If the receiver perceives the loudness as anger, the loud voice creates not only a distraction from attending but also a distortion of interpretation. If the receiver responds accordingly, the sender may be quite surprised. Essentially, interference is anything that reduces or distorts the clarity, accuracy, meaning, understanding, or retention of a message.

**Channel**

A channel is the means by which messages flow between sources and receivers. The usual communication channels are light waves and sound waves, which allow us to see and hear one another in face-to-face interactions. However, if a letter is sent from one person to another, the paper itself serves as the means by which the message is conveyed. If you settle in to watch the evening news on television, the television set serves as the channel. Books, films, DVDs, computers, radios, magazines, newspapers, and pictures are channels through which messages may be conveyed.

We also receive communication by smelling, touching, and tasting. We sometimes take these senses for granted, but imagine walking into a bakery and not being able to smell the aroma or taste the flavors. And, all you have to do is hug someone you care about to recognize how important touch is. All five senses, therefore, contribute to communication.

**Receiver**

Both persons function as receivers in the model depicted in Figure 1.4. A receiver analyzes and interprets messages, in effect translating them into meaning. This process is called decoding. You are simultaneously a receiver and a source. As you listen to another person’s message, you react with body movements and facial expressions, and the person sending the message receives the information conveyed by your physical reactions. Like the source, a receiver has several roles: to receive (hear, see, touch, smell, or taste) the message; to attend to the message; to interpret and analyze the message; to store and recall the message; and to respond to the source, message, channel, environment, and noise. In addition, Maggie also has communication skills, knowledge, attitudes, and a sociocultural background that differ from those of James.
The greater the differences between James and Maggie, the more effort Maggie must make to be a competent receiver.

**Feedback**

Another component in the communication process is feedback, the response to a message that a receiver sends back to a source. Feedback enables a sender to determine whether the communication has been received and understood as intended. To share meaning accurately, the sender must correct faulty messages and misconceptions, repeat missed meanings, and correct responses as necessary.

Feedback is a natural extension of effective receiving. Receivers have the responsibility of attending to, decoding, and determining a message’s intended meaning. The next logical step is to provide responses (feedback) that let the sender know the message was received and understood. It is then up to the sender to decide whether the feedback provides enough information to judge whether the receiver accurately interpreted the message. Thus, feedback serves as a kind of control mechanism in the communication process. Unfortunately, we too often fail to monitor our own communication and, more important, others’ reactions to it, so we are often not heard or are misunderstood. For example, consider what would happen if restaurant employees requested a pay raise or bonus because of an especially profitable and successful party. The boss told everyone he or she would get a bonus in the next paycheck but failed to tell payroll. The employees wondered what went wrong.

Feedback is an essential component of the communication process because it is both a corrective device and a means by which we learn about ourselves. It helps us adjust to others and assess ourselves. Giving feedback to others is just as important as receiving it, making communication truly a shared process.

Feedback offers other advantages. A classic study found that when feedback is increased, reception of information is enhanced. The experiment required four groups of students to construct geometric patterns that were described by a teacher under conditions that differed for each group: (1) zero feedback—the teacher’s back was turned to the students, and they were not allowed to ask questions or make noise; (2) visible audience feedback—the students could see the teacher’s face but could not ask questions; (3) limited verbal feedback—the students were allowed to ask the teacher questions, but the teacher could respond only with yes or no; and (4) free feedback—all channels of communication were open, with no limits placed on the type of questions asked of the teacher or the depth of response the teacher could provide. Students provided with no opportunity to receive feedback from the teacher fared poorly, whereas each increasing level of feedback produced better results. This study resulted in two important findings: (1) As the amount of feedback increases, so does the accuracy of communication; and (2) as the amount of feedback increases, so does the recipient’s confidence in her or his performance.

**Environment**

The environment, or atmosphere, refers to the psychological and physical surroundings in which communication occurs. The environment encompasses the attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and relationships of the communicators as well as the characteristics of the location in which communication takes place, for example, the size, color, arrangement, decoration, and temperature of the room.
The environment affects the nature and quality of the communication. For example, it is much easier to carry on an intimate conversation in a private, quiet, and comfortable setting than in a public, noisy, and uncomfortable setting. Most of us find it easier to communicate with someone we know than with someone we do not know. Some environments appear to foster communication, whereas others seem to inhibit it. Consider these contrasting environments. One office is clean, is painted light blue, and has quiet music playing in the background. The office has a pleasant and inviting smell. Two people, seated in soft, comfortable desk chairs at clean and organized desks, are working alongside each other, smiling, and they take frequent breaks to share funny stories and family updates. They show genuine concern for each other. Their communication is open and caring. Another office is cluttered, is painted dark brown, and has no music playing in the background. The office has a musty odor. Desks are cluttered and set up in small cubicles. Two people sit in uncomfortable chairs in a cubicle, side-by-side. One person blasts his music at high volume on his computer and disrupts the other’s work. They show little respect for each other. Their communication is guarded.

How does the appearance of the room ultimately affect the negative communication? Both effective and ineffective forms of communication are, in part, products of their environments. Effective communication can occur anywhere and under most circumstances, but pleasing, comfortable environments (along with open, trusting relationships) are more likely to produce positive exchanges.

**Context**

The broad circumstances or situation in which communication occurs is called the **context**. Communication does not take place in a vacuum. It happens in informal and formal settings, such as between two friends; among five colleagues in a business meeting; or between a rabbi, priest, cleric, or minister and a group of worshippers. The

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**Guidelines**

**Understanding Yourself and the Communication Process**

1. Remember that competent communicators do everything they can to help their listeners understand the communication in the way it is intended.

2. Recognize that interference from both external and internal sources may make the communication act difficult to interpret the way you, the sender, intend it.

3. Although you often cannot control environmental factors (heat or lack of it, outside noise, dim or too-bright lighting), you can control your own speech rate, volume, use of pauses, use of gestures, and correct pronunciations, and these factors can increase your effectiveness.

4. If you carefully choose your words and the way you present your message (encoding), your listeners have a better chance of understanding you.

5. If you observe your listeners (receivers), you will learn how to read their nonverbal feedback and be able to adapt your message to them.

6. Remember that listening is a critical aspect of the communication process.
number of people, the type of communication, and the situation in which the communication occurs all lend themselves to the context. Each context affects what we say and how we say it. Contexts also help determine the type of communication used.

Types of Communication

Type of communication is usually distinguished by the number of people involved, by the purpose of the communication, and by the degree of formality with which it occurs. Each type of communication involves appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Five types of communication are discussed in this text: intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, team, and public. We also refer to elements of social media and communication here and throughout the text.

Intrapersonal Communication

To communicate with others, we must first understand how we communicate with ourselves. This process of understanding information within oneself is called intrapersonal communication. As we mature, we learn a lot about our surroundings and ourselves. Much of what we learn is gained from our own experiences. Even though we are taught many things by others, we must learn many things through our own experiences and can learn no other way.

Intrapersonal communication also occurs anytime we evaluate or attempt to understand the interaction occurring between us and anything that communicates a message to us. We are involved in intrapersonal communication as we receive, attend to, interpret and analyze, store and recall, or respond in some fashion to any message.

Intrapersonal communication includes diverse internal activities such as thinking, problem solving, conflict resolution, planning, emotion, stress, evaluation, and relationship development. All messages that we create first occur within us. Ultimately, all communication takes place within each of us as we react to communication cues. Intrapersonal communication may occur without the presence of any other type of communication, but all other types of communication cannot occur without it. In fact, intrapersonal communication is almost always happening, yet we don’t often think about it as a type of communication.

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is creating and sharing meaning between persons who are in a relationship. It is similar to intrapersonal communication in that it helps us share information, solve problems, resolve conflicts, understand our perception of self and of others, and establish relationships with others. (In the chapters on relational contexts, interpersonal relationships and our relationships with friends and family members are discussed in more detail.)

A subcomponent of interpersonal communication is dyadic communication. Dyadic communication is simply defined as an exchange of information between two people. It includes informal conversations, such as talks with a parent, spouse, child, friend, acquaintance, or stranger, as well as more formal ones, such as interviews. An
interview is a carefully planned and executed question-and-answer session designed to exchange desired information between two parties.

Another subcomponent of interpersonal communication is small-group communication, an exchange of information among a relatively small number of people, ideally five to seven, who share a common purpose, such as completing a task, solving a problem, making a decision, or sharing information. (The chapters on the small group context discuss the purposes, characteristics, leadership, participation, decision making, problem solving, and evaluation of communication in small groups.)

Public Communication

In public communication, a message is transmitted from one person who speaks to a number of individuals who listen. The most widely used form of public communication is a public speech. We find ourselves on the listening end of a public speech in lecture classes, political rallies, group meetings, and religious services.

Although many similarities exist between public speaking and other types of communication, some differences can also be noted. Public speaking almost always is more highly structured than the other types. To be done well, it demands much detailed planning and preparation by the speaker. Unlike participants in other forms of communication, listeners do not regularly interrupt the speaker with questions or comments. It is the public speaker’s responsibility to anticipate questions that listeners may have and to attempt to answer them.

Public speaking almost always requires a more formal use of language and a more formal delivery style than the other types. The use of jargon, poor grammar, or slang is usually not accepted or tolerated in public speeches. The speaker must use language precisely and must speak clearly in order to be heard throughout the audience. This may require the speaker to eliminate distracting vocal and physical mannerisms that might be tolerated in other types of communication.

Public speeches are often presented for three purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. They are also presented to introduce, to pay tribute, to accept, and to welcome. (These topics are considered in detail in the section on public speaking.)

Mass Communication

Mass communication generally signifies that professionals are communicating with or to a very large number of people via radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, or movies. These channels constitute the means by which messages are directed to a large group (mass) of people. In these instances, the professional communicator—news reporter, anchor, or book author—acts as the source. The large audience functions as receivers. In mass communication, opportunities for feedback are often minimal, given the one-way nature of communication. In some situations though, an individual audience member (receiver) may write a letter to the editor of a newspaper, send an email to a news reporter, or call in to a radio show.

Communication via Social Media

Communication via social media is any communication transmitted through digital devices or platforms (iPhones, cell phones, BlackBerries, text messaging, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, and so on). These technologies are often highly accessible and allow...
us to accomplish multiple objectives. For example, iPhones are used to text with a friend, review your Facebook news feed, tweet to your followers, send and receive emails, snap a picture and post it to Facebook, and record a video and post it to YouTube.

Technology has advanced so quickly and is so popular that we can purchase relatively inexpensive hardware and software and have global “face-to-face conversations.” Digital cameras allow us to share pictures of ourselves, our families, and special events with friends all over the world. Free versions of Skype allow us to video conference with others in near or faraway places. As technology continues to develop and change, one thing remains consistent: Communication is the process that helps us make connections. Communication is a learned tool that enables us to function in our personal and family lives, in our social and work lives, and in our roles as citizens of the world. Many people are concerned that technology will negatively affect the way we interact with each other on a one-to-one basis. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to search for ways to use it in a positive manner. If you email a campus administrator or an employer, remember to use appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Do not use emoticons that are common in texting. If you’re making a request by mail or phone, be sure you are courteous and clear about who you are and what you seek. You are judged by how well you communicate through whatever means you choose.

Distinguishing Social Media from Face-to-Face Communication

We tend to use social media because we perceive it as quick and convenient. Is one form of social media different from another type of technology? Are social media really that different from face-to-face communication? The simple answer is “yes.” The complete answer, though, is much more complex. For many years, communication technology scholar Nancy Baym has examined how humans create personal connections in an age of increasing reliance on social media.16 She writes that seven concepts help us distinguish different forms of social media from one another and from face-to-face communication.

Interactivity

Interactivity refers to the ability of a communication tool to facilitate social interaction between groups or individuals. Unlike television shows and, to a certain degree, radio, social media allow us to talk back. Because social media foster interactivity, they also lead to new possibilities to remain connected and engaged with others. Face-to-face communication, like certain forms of social media, is highly interactive. Facebook and text messaging permit us to remain linked with our local and long-distance friends and family. Many businesses use Facebook and other social networking tools to remain connected with and gather feedback from customers.

Temporal Structure

Face-to-face communication is instantaneous—you say something to your friend, and almost immediately he responds with verbal and nonverbal messages. Certain
forms of social media may not feature this luxury. A device’s **temporal structure** refers to the time it takes to send and receive messages. Face-to-face conversations, phone calls, and online instant messages occur in real time and are **synchronous** forms of communication whereby each person simultaneously serves as sender and receiver. When we use email, send a text message, or post on a friend’s Facebook wall, delays often occur and we must alternate being the sender and receiver of a message. These interactions are **asynchronous** methods of communication, but often, they could be just as synchronous as a phone call. How quickly does it take you to respond to a text message? More than likely you feel a strong need to respond and maintain a connection with the person who texts you. In the workplace, colleagues often send and reply to emails so quickly that the exchange could easily be viewed as a synchronous form of communication.

Synchronous social media can make messages feel more personal, and even make you feel more connected with your significant other when you are far apart. Unlike some synchronous social media, the asynchronous types may permit you to more strategically manage your self-presentation. You can spend considerable time crafting an email to your professor that explains your most recent absence from class. If you get into a heated argument with your romantic partner and storm out of the room, you may find it easier to compose a long email that details your frustrations, feelings, and plans for the future. We can place fewer demands on a person’s time when we use asynchronous social media, but we will likely wait longer than we would like for a response.

**Social Cues**

Many of the challenges we experience with social media derive from a lack of **social cues**—the verbal and nonverbal features of a message that offer more information about the context, the meaning, and the identities of the involved parties. Face-to-face social cues often include facial expression, vocal tone, eye contact, and hand gestures. The absence of specific social cues with **lean** social media devices can create interpersonal challenges and misinterpretations. **Rich** forms of communication, such as Skype and similar video conferencing services and face-to-face communication, offer a full range of social cues, while other lean tools, such as a telephone, provide fewer.

Rich social media devices provide more social cues than do lean devices. In calling your friend’s cell phone when you are both on campus, what is the first thing you say after your friend answers the phone? You probably say something like, “Hey, where are you?” As is the case with many lean forms of social media, we have no idea of the physical location of our conversational partners. Yet, we seek this information to develop an understood context and make the media appear richer than it really is. In face-to-face conversations, you know for sure whether your friend is busy, preoccupied, and unable to talk. If we are on a cell phone, we are unaware of these social cues unless we ask.

**Replicability**

Face-to-face conversations are difficult, if not impossible, to replicate. Stated simply, it is extremely difficult to recreate the exact words, nonverbal communication cues, and emotions felt during a particular interaction. You may find it difficult to explain to your mother what was said during a recent fight with your boyfriend.
Social media’s **replicability** means that communication can occur in an environment that makes it easy to record and redistribute past messages. The posts we make to an online blog or a friend’s Facebook page can easily be replicated and shared with others. We can never go back in time and change what message we sent; the meaning will always remain.

### Storage

In many ways, face-to-face conversations, once they occur, are gone forever. Social media’s ability for storage allows messages to be digitally saved and made accessible to other people. Facebook, Twitter, and other tools can log conversations and create a permanent storage space for our messages. Posts to a friend’s Facebook page may be there to stay unless the friend deletes them. The harsh and abrasive asynchronous email that you send to a coworker can be easily forwarded along to your supervisor, where it may be stored for future use. After a friend uploads pictures to Facebook following a fun weekend, how quickly are people tagged in those photos? Not long. In a matter of minutes, the record of your activities can be stored online. Now, more than ever, we must remain attuned to the differences between social media and face-to-face communication—especially in light of social media’s reach.

### Reach

Unlike face-to-face communication, social media have tremendous reach, or the ability to connect with individuals in local and long-distance places. Face-to-face communication is often limited to those individuals who can fit in a particular room. However, in one single keystroke or tap of an iPhone screen, a message can be sent to thousands or perhaps millions of people. Twitter provides a platform for messages to **“go viral”**—or reach enormous audiences by “infecting” viewers and users with the message.

In January 2011, a newspaper reporter from the *Columbus Dispatch* approached an intersection while driving through the city and met Ted Williams, a homeless man who was panhandling for spare change. A disheveled Williams held a sign that explained he was a former radio announcer who had fallen on hard times, was in need of money, and possessed “a God-given gift of voice.” The reporter offered $1 to Williams if he demonstrated his gift. In booming, professionally articulated broadcast quality, Williams exclaimed: “When you’re listening to the best of oldies, you’re listening to Magic 98.9.” Soon after, the reporter posted the video on the newspaper’s website. The video was then reposted to YouTube and from there it went viral. The viral video made its way to Facebook and MySpace, where friends and friends of friends posted the video to their pages. Within one day, a well-groomed Williams was in New York City appearing on several national television shows. Job offers poured in. The incredible reach of social media has dramatically changed how we send, receive, and interpret messages. The ability to record a video, snap a picture, and send a message to thousands now rests in the palms of our hands.
Chapter 1  Connecting Process and Principles

Mobility

The various forms of social media feature varying degrees of mobility, or the extent to which a device is portable or stationary. Unlike social media, face-to-face communication is mobile to the extent that we are able to walk, run, or travel to a particular location to engage in conversation. Clunky desktop computers and landline telephones tie us to a specific spot. Social media users can access applications on a stationary desktop computer, a portable laptop, or a smartphone from any location on earth—as long as cell phone service or wireless Internet access exists. The mobility of certain social media enables us to always be in touch with our friends and family. Facebook and other social networks cannot be accessed only on a desktop computer; they are readily available on smartphones.

Because social media keep us connected with others at all times, we are often expected to respond instantly to an email, text message, and, at times, a post to our Facebook wall. Social media have connected us but essentially made us accountable to others at all times.

Misconceptions about Communication

Several misconceptions keep many of us from examining our own communication more closely. Notice the emphasis on our own! Most of us who have problems communicating tend to look for the fault in places other than ourselves. Becoming aware that these misconceptions exist and that many people accept them as truths should help us understand why the study of communication is necessary. Here are some of the most common myths that interfere with the improvement of personal communication skills.
Misconceptions about Communication

Myth 1: Communication Is a Cure-All

The first misconception is that communication has the magical power to solve all of our problems. The act of communicating with others does not carry any guarantees. Obviously, without communication, we cannot address problems, but sometimes communication can create more of them than it solves.

Here is one example: Our neighbor is a realtor. She created a flyer for distribution in the neighborhood and asked me to read it and tell her what I thought about it. She had obviously spent a great deal of time on the project. When I looked it over, I told her that I thought the message would not reach what she indicated was her intended audience. She became quite agitated and said that I was the only one who had anything negative to say. I had taken her message literally, when she really wanted affirmation that she had done a good job. How might I have avoided angering her?

Communication can help to eliminate or reduce our problems, but it is not a panacea. Communicating itself does not make the difference; the message that is communicated does.

Myth 2: Quantity Means Quality

We often assume that the more we communicate, the better. People who communicate a great deal are often perceived as more friendly, competent, and powerful and as having greater leadership potential than those who do not. However, quantity of communication is not the same as quality. A mother tells her high school son that he cannot wear a certain shirt to his older brother’s college graduation ceremony. The younger son likes the shirt and feels that it is appropriate and that everyone else wears similar shirts. Neither mother nor son will change her or his view, and they continue to argue. Each becomes more defensive and louder until another family member steps in to stop the argument. In this case, as in the one described in the first myth section, it isn’t the act or the amount of communication, but the content of communication, that makes the difference.

The convenience of social media allows us to send email messages and Facebook posts in rapid succession. Have you ever received multiple texts from a friend within seconds? Perhaps the initial text autocorrected to a word your friend did not intend to send and, as a result, your friend fired off a text to correct the error and then a series of others to apologize and add on to the conversation. One carefully composed text message would have been much more effective than a series of short texts with typographical errors.

Myth 3: Meaning Is in the Words We Use

If your sister tells you that she doesn’t feel well, what would that mean to you? That she is sick? That she has a cold? That she has an upset stomach? That her feelings have been hurt? It could mean any number of things because without context and more information, the statement is not clear. If she tells you that she has a cold and doesn’t feel well, is that message clear? Well, at least it would narrow the choices a little. Confusion may arise because the statement “I don’t feel well” is relative; that is, it might not signify the same thing to you as it does to her. Some people use this statement to refer to a minor discomfort, whereas others mean they are more seriously ill. The words themselves could refer to many degrees or types of conditions. Thus, meanings are in people and not in the words they use.
The notion that words contain meanings is probably the most serious misconception of all. Words have meaning only when we give them meaning. No two people share the same meanings for all words because no two people completely share the same background and experiences. Thus, the meaning of a word cannot be separated from the person using it.

**Myth 4: We Have a Natural Ability to Communicate**

Many people believe that because we are born with the physical and mental equipment needed for communication, it must be a natural ability. This simply is not true. The capacity to communicate, like almost everything we do, is learned. Most of us possess the physical ability to tie our shoes, but we still have to learn how the strings go together. Similarly, most of us are born with the ability to see, but that does not make us able to read. Reading requires knowledge of the alphabet, the acquisition of vocabulary, and practice. The ability to communicate requires not only capability but also an understanding of how human communication works and an opportunity to use that knowledge.

**Myth 5: Communication Is Reversible**

All of us sometimes make a blunder in communication. We might think that we can take something back, but that is impossible. Once something is said, it is out there; the listener will have to deal with that message, and the speaker will have to try to explain and compensate for what was said. For example, in a moment of anger, we say something that we regret and later ask the other person to “forget I even said that.” Although the other person may forgive us for speaking in anger, it is not likely that he or she will forget what was said. When we communicate through writing, we can take things back until we let someone else see what we’ve written. When we send oral messages, others can hear and will respond to what we say, even if we don’t really mean to say things the way they come out.

If you are exchanging email messages with a manager or colleague, it is important to remain aware of your receivers. If you raise a sensitive workplace issue in an email and quickly click “send,” you may later notice that your boss was inadvertently copied on the email. If you did not intend to send this email to your supervisor, you may have some explaining to do. Always remember that communication is irreversible. As in face-to-face communication, the moment we send a message through social media, the moment we send a message through social media, that message is out there for the world to see and react to. It is important, therefore, to carefully organize our thoughts and choose our words before we utter (or type) them to others.

Competent communication is essential in all aspects of our everyday lives. Effective communication enhances our personal, social, and career relationships and allows us to make connections with people from other cultures.
Guidelines

Improving Communication Competence

1. We must understand the role of communication in our lives, be aware of the complexity of the communication process and different types of communication, and understand how face-to-face communication is different from communication via social media.

2. We also need to realize that myths about communication may hinder our ability to develop effective communication.

3. Good communicators have developed a broad communication repertoire, a range of communication behaviors from which to choose.20

4. Competent communicators possess the ability to coordinate several communication tasks simultaneously. For example, a competent communicator will, at the same time, choose a way of conveying a message, consider what the receiver’s various responses might be, and plan a way to restate the message if the first attempt is not effective.

5. Background knowledge about communication, practical experience, and feedback given in the classroom will help you think on your feet and make better decisions as you communicate. You will also gain confidence and the ability to evaluate your skills as your work in this course progresses.

Summary

1. Define communication.
   Communication is the simultaneous sharing and creating of meaning through human symbolic interaction. It involves a range of behaviors and occurs in a variety of situations.

2. Identify four reasons for studying communication.
   The ability to communicate (not simply to utter words) is learned; learning to be a competent communicator is a difficult, lifelong project.
   - We live in a technological society and use social media to interact with others in our social network.
   - Communication plays a vital role in career success.
   - Communication involves a high degree of ethical behavior.
   - We live in a multicultural society and interact with people from different cultures.

3. Explain the fundamental principles of communication.
   To appreciate the true nature of communication, it is important to understand four fundamental principles. These principles are readily applicable to life beyond the classroom.
   - Communication is a process because it involves a series of actions that has no beginning or end and is constantly changing.
   - Communication is a system, a combination of parts interdependently acting to form a whole.
• Communication is transactional because messages are simultaneously sent and received between people.
• Communication can be intentional or unintentional.

Define the essential components in the communication process.
Several components interact when two people are communicating. These components are constantly in flux as communicators react to each other.
• The source/sender is the creator of the message.
• A message is the communication produced by the source.
• Anything that changes the meaning of an intended message is called interference.
• A channel is the means by which messages flow between sources and receivers.
• A receiver analyzes, interprets, and translates messages into meaning.
• Feedback is the response to a message that a receiver sends back to a source.
• The environment includes the psychological and physical surroundings in which communication occurs.
• The broad circumstances or situation in which communication occurs is referred to as the context.

Differentiate the various types of communication: intrapersonal, interpersonal (including group), public, mass, and communication via social media.
The type of communication is usually distinguished by the number of people involved, by the purpose of the message, and by the degree of formality with which it occurs.
• Intrapersonal communication is the process of understanding information within oneself.
• Interpersonal communication is creating and sharing meaning between persons who are in a relationship.
• Public communication occurs when a message is transmitted from one person to a number of individuals who listen.
• Mass communication means that professionals are communicating with or to a very large number of people via radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, or movies.
• Communication via social media is any communication transmitted through digital devices or platforms such as iPhones, text messaging, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, and so on.

Differentiate social media from face-to-face communication.
Several concepts help us distinguish different forms of social media from one another and from face-to-face communication. These concepts help us understand how we make connections with others in an age in which we rely more and more on social media.
• Interactivity refers to the ability of a communication tool to facilitate social interaction between groups or individuals.
• A social media device’s temporal structure refers to the time it takes to send and receive messages.
• Social cues are the verbal and nonverbal features of a message that offer more information about the context, the meaning, and the identities of the involved parties.
• Social media’s replicability means that communication can occur in an environment that makes it easy to record and redistribute past messages.
• Unlike face-to-face communication, social media’s ability for storage allows messages to be digitally saved and made accessible to other people.
• Unlike face-to-face communication, social media have tremendous reach, or the ability to connect with individuals in local and long-distance places.
• Social media feature varying degrees of mobility, or the extent to which a device is portable or stationary.

**Summarize** five common myths about communication. Several misconceptions keep many of us from examining our own communication more closely. Many people who have problems communicating tend to look for the fault in places other than themselves.

- Communication has the magical power to solve all of our problems. It does not.
- We often assume that the more we communicate, the better. However, the quantity of communication is not the same as quality.
- Meaning is in the words we use. Actually, meanings are in people and not in the words they use.
- We have a natural ability to communicate. That ability, like almost everything we do, is learned.
- Communication is reversible. In truth, once something is said, it is out there. We cannot take it back.

**Discussion Starters**

1. Why is communication regarded as difficult and complex?
2. Whom do you identify as an effective communicator?
3. What is the role of communication in our lives?
4. Explain what it means when we say that communication is a process.
5. How does a system differ from a process?
6. How can feedback motivate you to be more effective?
7. What can you do to improve your own communication with people from another culture?
8. What are some of the differences between face-to-face communication and that via social media?
9. What social media devices influence our communication and the quality of the messages we send and receive?