



TABLE 1.3

In A Nutshell

A Summary of Some Principles of Human Communication

Here, in brief, are the major principles of human communication, their basic ideas, and some skill implications.

Principles	Basic Ideas	Some Skill Implications
Communication Is Purposeful	Communication may serve a variety of purposes, for example, to learn, to relate, to help, to influence, to play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use your purposes to guide your verbal and nonverbal messages. ■ Identify the purposes in the messages of others.
Communication Is Transactional	The elements in communication are (1) always changing, (2) interdependent (each influences the other), and (3) dependent on the individual for their meaning and effect. In addition (4) each person is both speaker and listener.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ See messages as influenced by a variety of factors. ■ Base your message understanding on the words used and the person.
Communication Is a Package of Signals	Verbal and nonverbal messages work together in “packages,” usually to communicate the same meaning but at other times different or even opposite meanings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ See messages as a combination of signals. ■ Look to both verbal and nonverbal messages for a clearer understanding of another’s meaning.
Communication Is a Process of Adjustment	Communication can take place only to the extent that the communicators use the same system of signals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learn the other person’s system of signaling. ■ Adjust your verbal and nonverbal messages to the situation and the other individuals.
Communication Involves Content and Relationship Dimensions	Messages may refer to the real world, to something external to both speaker and listener (the content), and to the relationships between the parties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Distinguish between content and relationship messages. ■ Deal with relationship issues as relationship (not content) issues.
Communication Is Ambiguous	All messages and all relationships are potentially ambiguous.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use clear and specific terms. ■ Ask if you’re being understood. ■ Paraphrase complex ideas.
Communication Is Punctuated	Communication events are continuous transactions, punctuated into causes and effects for convenience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ See communication as an ongoing process rather than breaking it into causes and effects. ■ See alternative punctuations when trying to understand another’s point of view.
Communication Is Inevitable, Irreversible, and Unrepeatable	Messages are (almost) always being sent, can’t be uncommunicated, and are always unique, one-time occurrences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognize that you’re invariably communicating. ■ Remember that you can’t reverse communication. ■ Realize that each communication situation is unique and cannot be repeated.