

# 7 TIPS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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While it's great to be an expert at math, science, or social studies, there's another subject that will do more for your success in life: Communication. **Those with great communication skills have an easier time in life!**

Communication skills aren't covered as heavily as other subjects in school, and this is unfortunate. It's worth the time to enhance this important set of skills, even if you're already a good communicator.

**Keep these techniques in mind when communicating with others:**

**1. Use the right amount of eye contact.** There's a fine line between too much and too little eye contact. If you don't have enough eye contact, people will either think you're submissive or disinterested. If you have too much eye contact, you're viewed as aggressive. Finding the middle point allows you to be seen as likeable.

- **A good general rule to follow is to maintain eye contact when either of you is speaking.** Break eye contact when there is silence. This simple rule will improve your eye contact immensely. Experiment and see for yourself.
- If maintaining eye contact is uncomfortable for you, study the other person's eyes. What color are they? How big are their pupils? Imagine you're an artist and you have to draw the other person's eyes. You'd look very closely. Surprisingly, this can greatly reduce any anxiety you might be feeling.

**2. Listen better.** If you want to be known as a great conversationalist, become a great listener. There are so few people interested in truly listening to another person that you'll really stand out! Eye contact is part of being a good listener.

- Wait until the other person is finished before speaking. Avoid interrupting anyone.
- Give your full attention. This is more than just maintaining eye contact. It's possible to look someone in the eye and think about something else. Keep your attention on the other person.

**3. Ask open-ended questions.** It's hard to keep a conversation going if you ask questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no". Ask questions that require a more substantial answer. It's also a good idea to avoid answering questions with a one-word answer. Explain yourself.

**4. Be aware of your body language.** Your body language can make others view you as open and inviting or closed off. Avoid crossing your arms and legs. Turn and face people while you're communicating. Smile.

**5. Know the purpose of the communication.** What is the goal? **Have a goal for every interaction, even if that goal is just to enjoy yourself.** If you're negotiating a business deal, the goal is to negotiate the best possible deal for your side. Let your goal guide you throughout the conversation.

**6. Be certain that you understand.** It's easy to misinterpret what someone is attempting to communicate to you. Take the time to ensure that you've understood the other person correctly. Ask questions. Ask for clarification if you're unsure of the other person's message. Restate what you believe the

other person communicated to you.

7. **Be certain that you're understood.** It's just as important to ensure that the other person is clear on what you're communicating. Ask questions and ensure that you've been understood. Ensure that you're being clear in your message.

How well do you communicate with others? Even if you're a master at communication, you could be even better. **Most people don't communicate nearly as well as they could.** Enhancing your communication skills is an easy way to give a significant boost to multiple areas of your life.