

Skills Guide


THE OCR ENTRY LEVEL GUIDE TO TALK ABOUT

Version 2

This guide on 'Talk about' has been produced by OCR to help you understand the skills and techniques you will need to develop, practice and use in studying for your chosen qualification. This guide has not been written to go with any one qualification but focuses on research skills that are in many areas of both education and work environments. Other skills guides are available at www.ocr.org.uk.

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Getting started

Every day we communicate with people all over the world in many different ways.

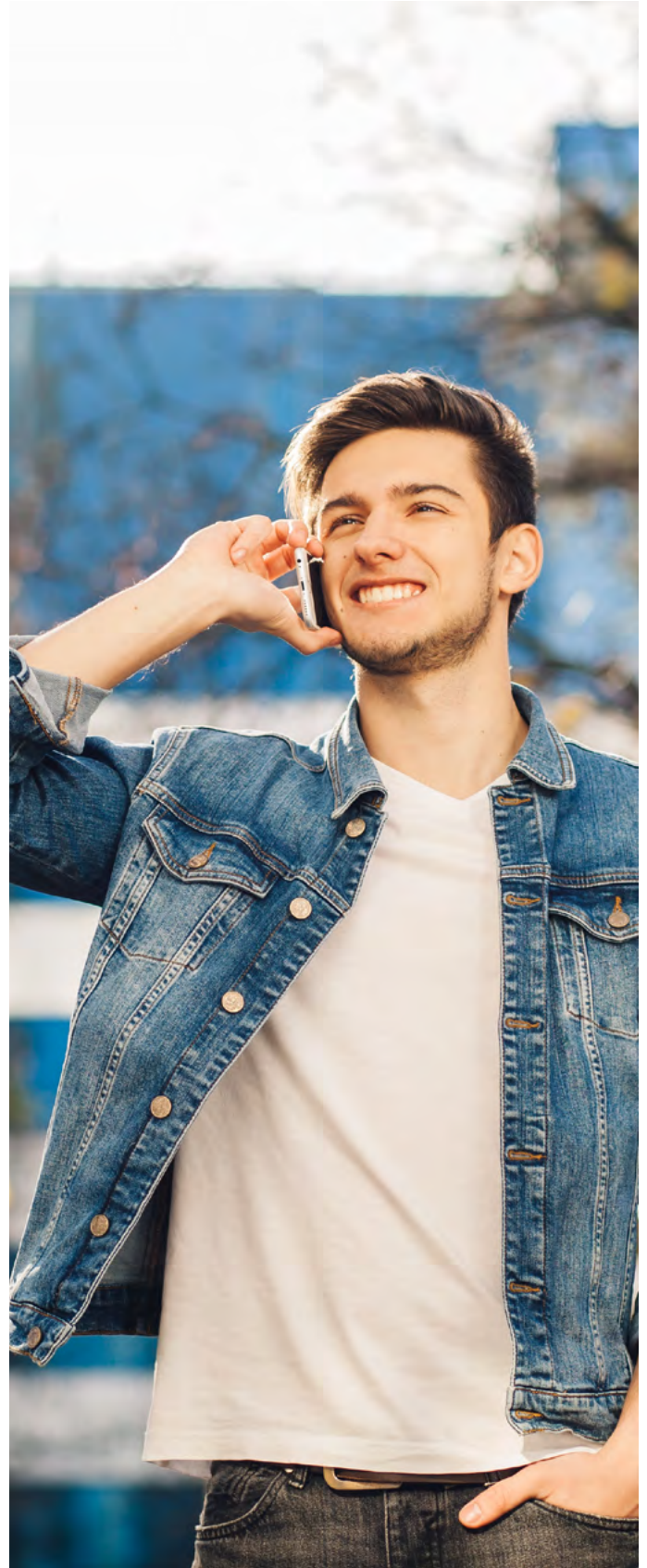
These could be:

- An advert on television or radio telling us about the latest computer game
- A text message from a friend or relative
- An email telling us some news
- A web site informing you of a sale of products
- A telephone call
- A job interview
- A presentation that you go to watch
- A pop-up advert from the internet

There are many different ways of communicating, which means the world of communication has become much easier to access, but at the same time, we have many different choices as to which method of communication we should choose.

- Is texting your teacher to say that you are not coming to school a good idea?
- Is telephoning people when launching a new product the quickest way to let people know that they should buy it?
- If you have had an argument with someone, is email the best way to say sorry?

This guide will help you understand about many of the different forms of communication that are used both in our social and working lives.



What is communication?

Communication is about getting information from one person to another person so that they understand the message.

Communicating will involve at least two people – the sender and the receiver. The information the person or people receive may need them to do something, so it will be important that they understand.

Do you know the game of '**Chinese Whispers**' or have you watched the TV show Copycats, where you whisper some information into someone's ear and they then whisper it to the next person, until you reach the end of the line. The message is often not the same at the end of the game as it was at the beginning. Not everyone listened carefully and then the message changed as it was passed on to the next person. Communicating well is important in life.

There are three main ways that people communicate: Speaking (verbal), not speaking (non-verbal) and written.



Speaking – verbal

Everyday you will speak to someone, for example:

- Saying 'goodbye' to the people you live with.
- Getting on a bus and saying where you want to travel to.
- Answering your telephone.
- Having a conversation with a friend face-to-face.
- Buying an item in a shop.
- Giving a presentation at school or college.

These are some of the different ways in which you will speak and pass on a message.



Examples

You will speak differently to your friends compared to you family or teachers. Why is this?

Often, we change the way that we speak to our friends by the tone of our voices or the language that we use. Think about when you speak to a baby or a young child - What do you change? We often will change what we say and how we say it and with a baby, we will make sounds to try to make them smile.

You will probably speak differently to someone at work. Why is this?

At work you will want to create a good impression of yourself, especially if you are going to a job interview. You will need to think about the language that you use and even if nervous, try to remain calm. It can be hard to do but will help with your communication skills.

Not speaking – non-verbal

You can let someone know that you are happy by smiling or let a friend know you are cross by looking angry. These are examples of not speaking skills, in other words, non-verbal ways of communicating with people.

When communicating with others, your non-verbal signs such as the expression on your face, where you look, how you move your head etc can show that you are listening, being truthful, interested and can create a good conversation. Other forms of not speaking skills could be:

Gestures

People often talk and move their hands around at the same time. These movements are known as *gestures* and it can make what is being said a little clearer for the person listening. For example if they were explaining about a small, medium and large house, they might make hand gestures to explain the different sizes. Some gestures however can be negative such as if someone was to point at you in an angry way, you would know that it was a negative form of communication.

Some gestures can be confusing and may give the wrong signals to the person you are talking to. For example, if someone folds their arms it could mean that they are

cross with you but it could also mean that they are not interested in what you are saying and are bored.

You should also remember that some gestures mean different things in different cultures, for example the thumbs up sign. In some cultures this is a good sign and means all is well, however in other cultures the same sign should not be used as it is offensive.

Face

We communicate with our faces all the time. Our faces can often show how we are feeling at that moment in time, and sometimes we do not know that our faces are showing what we are thinking.

Think about your day yesterday: Did you get cross? Did you find something funny? Did you find something sad? Were you happy? How did you show all these different feelings with your face? Use the table below and draw a simple face to show how you felt.



Emotion	Face
Happy	
Angry	
Laughing	
Sad	

Body language

People make judgements on others from the way they walk, sit, stand or position their head. If you walk in a relaxed way does that mean that you do not care as much as someone who walks very quickly or with a purpose? You can tell a lot about what a person's thinking from their body language.

Eye contact

In most Western cultures eye contact is a very important form of communication. Looking at someone in the eye can show that you are interested in what they are saying,

which means that you can have a conversation and respond. Not having eye contact could show that you are embarrassed, confused or not interested in what they are saying. For example, has your teacher ever asked for a volunteer to read something aloud in the class? Lots of people will look down so that they do not get picked!

Touch

People often communicate with others through touch. When you first meet someone at work you may shake hands. If you have a firm handshake what does that mean compared to someone with a weak handshake? This is another form of communication.



Let's discuss

Can you think of any other gestures or expressions that can have different meanings?

Speaking – verbal communication

Verbal communication is when messages are passed between at least two people and the most common form of verbal communication is face-to-face speaking. This could be:

- A chat with a friend or neighbour.
- A meeting with a teacher, colleague or manager.
- A video chat on Facetime or Skype.
- A group discussion on a recent topic.
- A presentation on a new course.
- It could even be watching a comedian on stage telling jokes to an audience.

Other forms of verbal communication could be:

- A telephone conversation with a customer.
- A voicemail message that has been left.
- A television programme or advert.
- An audio book.
- Videos on the internet.
- Sign language is considered to be a verbal form of communication as well.

In all the examples above, the tone of the voice will make the person listening understand even more.

Tone

It is important when thinking about a situation, that you decide upon the best form of communication. Should it be a formal form of communication e.g. a business meeting or an informal chat? Which is going to be best? Which is going to be the most effective? Does anyone else need to know? If so, should it be a group meeting?

When you have decided upon the best form of verbal communication, you will need to think about what is going to be said. If the language used is not understood, then the message will not get across, if you speak softly will you be heard? If you speak too loudly will the person you are talking to feel embarrassed? If you are not interested you may sound bored!

You will also need to think about *how* you are going to say what you are going to say. This is called 'tone'. The tone of your voice can change the meaning of the words you say.

When did you last have a chat on the telephone? Were you happy or sad? If you were happy, how did the person you were speaking to know? If you were sad, how did the person know? Tone can show our feelings to others even if they can't see us. That's why it is important in all verbal situations.

These are all different examples of how important the tone of your voice and the language spoken can affect how the person you are speaking to reacts to what you say. This is why thought is needed in each situation.



Written communication

There are many different forms of written communication that are used every day in our personal lives. You could write a list for shopping, a list of 'things to do', revision notes, reminders – all sorts of different written forms of communication. You could even write a 'thank you letter' to an Aunt or Uncle for a birthday present that you received.

We see different examples of written communication in our lives. It could be:

- An advertisement at a bus stop.
- A newspaper headline.
- A leaflet through the front door about a new pizza delivery business.
- A book that you are reading.
- Information on web pages.
- An email from someone.
- A noticeboard at college or work.
- A questionnaire about your studies.
- A form you have to fill in for membership.
- A news letter telling you of the latest information about your course.
- An assignment you need to complete.
- A text message from a friend.

We have many different choices of written communication especially with mobile phones. According to research from OFCOM 150 billion text messages were sent in 2011. <http://media.ofcom.org.uk/2012/07/18/uk-is-now-texting-more-than-talking/>. Instant messaging has grown even more popular than

texting over the past few years. In 2012 about 19 billion messages were sent world wide everyday over the internet in comparison to 17.1 billion texts. In the future it is expected that this will rise even further to 50 billion chat messages being sent a day by 2014.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/04/29/instant-messaging-overtake-texting_n_3176599.html

The first text was sent over 20 years ago in 1992 with a simple message of 'Merry Christmas'. But it was really only in 1999 when texting became a way of life for many. Texting has transformed some people lives, making it easier to communicate with family and friends more easily. Texting has even formed its own language known as 'text speak'.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-20555620>

Other forms of written communication might be a report about your progress at school, college or work. You might receive a letter offering you a job. Businesses use different forms of written communication to communicate with their staff:

- Memo
- Letter
- Email
- Notices

A memo or Memorandum is used within a business (internal) to inform another person about some information. It is very similar to a note as it will be a small amount of information. It may need the person who reads the memo (the receiver) to do something, for example, research a topic.

Find out

Can you think of examples of any text speak? For example: LOL = Laugh Out Loud

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM



TO: JAMES JOHNSON
FROM: LOUISE SMITH
SUBJECT: CLIENT 234
DATE: MARCH 13, 2013
CC: RICHARD JAMES

The meeting with the above client went very well and has meant that our order from this business has now increased by 50% for next year. They have asked for information on the 741 series. Please can you send it to them?
 Thank you.

It is very important that when you write information that the words are correct – some English words have a double meaning.

Some words sound the same but are spelt differently and mean different things for example:

- *Two* boys went to the seaside and they ate *too* many ice creams.
- A button has fallen off my shirt so I had to *sew* it back on again.
- The girls went to London on the train, when they got *there* they met *their* friend at the station.
- She looked on the internet to see *whether* the *weather* would be sunny the next day.

Other words are spelt the same but can mean different things, for example in the sentences below:

- There was a *row* on the boat about which oars they should use to *row*.
- The nurse *wound* the bandage around the *wound* on his arm.

Written forms of communication must be clear and have accurate spelling so that they can be understood by the reader.



Help! I don't understand!

There will be times when communication does not work as it should do. Often it is because the message has not been received in the way that the sender wanted. It is important that the sender reads the communication before sending it.

These mixed messages are sometimes called '**Barriers to Communication**'. Common types of barriers are:

- Language
- Cultural differences
- Jargon
- Physical disabilities
- Different views

Communication is very important in our ever changing world. Communication around the world is much easier with computers, mobile phones and tablets, meaning that even though the world is big, the world of communicating is much, much smaller for all to use.



Communication tasks and activities

Task

- a) Write a list of the different forms of communication that **you have received** in the past week.
- b) From the list of different forms of communication that **you have received**, which do you think were informal (for example, from friends) and which were more formal (for example, from college, school or work)? Mark these on your list.
- c) Write a list of the different forms of communication that **you have sent** in the past week.
- d) From the list of different forms of communication that **you have sent**, which do you think were informal and formal? Mark these on your list.

Non-verbal game

This is a group task where everyone in the group must not speak. Each person must sit on a chair in a circle, facing each other.

Scenario : All group members are on a newly discovered planet called Rema. It is very, very small and only 4 people can stand on the planet at once for no more than 10 seconds as long as the rest sit down. The planet will explode if there is too much standing weight on the surface. To survive the group must keep 4 people standing at all times for not more than ten seconds and as a group they must co-operate with each other only using non-verbal methods of communication. They must work out a system.



Activity 1

You need to let your manager know that you have to go to an appointment but it will mean that you miss the first two hours of work. Thinking about all the communication methods that you have learnt in this guide, which method do you think you should use to tell your manager you are going to be late? Why is this the right method of communication?

Activity 2

You haven't finished your latest assignment for your course. You need to tell your tutor/teacher but which method of communication should you use? Why should you use this method instead of another one?

Activity 3

You are going to be 30 minutes late meeting a friend because the bus you were on broke down. What method of communication will you use and why?



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