

AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In a complex and culturally diverse world, the ability to communicate effectively has become increasingly important. In our professional as well as personal lives we are constantly using languages to convey our thoughts and ideas to others. Effective communication skills are therefore essential in whatever we do or say. For, if our thoughts and ideas are not successfully conveyed, we might end up with a conundrum that could be difficult or impossible to resolve.

This book will help you understand the process of communication skills. It will introduce you to the basic concepts and process relevant to understanding oral and written communication in a variety of interpersonal, academic and business contexts. The book is designed to promote insight into the communication processes of self and others, critical thinking, intellectual growth and communicative competence.

In spite of the increasing importance placed on communication skills, many individuals continue to struggle with this; many of us are unable to communicate our thoughts and ideas effectively-whether in verbal or written format. This inability makes it nearly impossible for them to compete effectively in the workplace, and stands in the way of career progression. This book is for all those who fall in this category and for all those who don't. Because it also helps you to become better at whatever you are good at.

In a recent survey of recruiters from companies with more than 50,000 employees, communication skills were cited as the single more important decisive factor in choosing managers. The survey, conducted by the University of Pittsburgh's Katz Business School, points out that communication skills, including written and oral presentations, as well as the ability to work with others, are among the main factors contributing to job success. Therefore this book is for all those who wish to succeed in their professional spheres both as students and as professionals.

The importance of speaking effectively in public is extremely crucial for professional success. Research reveals that the higher an employee is placed within the professional hierarchy the more s/he is expected to speak. With the latest communication technology at their fingertips, employees now spend more time speaking than writing, whether talking on the phone, through videoconferences, through net telephony, conversing informally with colleagues, conducting meetings, or making sales presentations. It therefore pays to hone our oral communication skills. The first section of this book and the suggestions given therein are sure to help you improve your oral communication skills.

The effectiveness of written communication is largely dependent on three key factors: thinking, planning and executing. Whether you are drafting a letter or writing a subject of purpose, you cannot blindly begin writing. Remember fools rush what you are going to write before you put pen to paper. Once you have got some idea about what can go into your text, you need to plan how best you can present the information/ideas that you have thought about. And finally once you have penned down your ideas you need to revise and edit the text before you submit that essay/report or post that letter/proposal or hit the send key for an email.

All communication works on the **3-T principle**:
Tell them about what you are going to tell them
Tell Them
Tell them that you have told them.

In other words, arrange your material into an introduction, body and a conclusion. In other words, arrange your material into an introduction, body and a conclusion. In the opening statement/introduction give your speakers an overview of the topic on which you are going to speak, clearly delineating the purpose of your subject. Then go on to talk about the main relevant ideas and thoughts related to that topic in an interesting, lucid and informative manner. When concluding ask if

there are any questions. Do not leave your audience with questions; clarify all uncertainties. Then sum up by reiterating the main points and leave the audience with some food for thought so as to leave a lasting impression. If you follow this principle in all oral communication, you will go a long way as an effective speaker.

Whether you are writing or reading, always keep in mind the 4Cs of good communication: Correctness, Clarity, Conciseness and Courtesy.

Correctness of language creates the right impression in a reader's/listener's mind. If you are grammatically inconsistent or inaccurate in your writing or speaking, your purpose of communication will be diluted and there may be chances of miscommunication. Correctness of information is also a very important issue in communication. Withholding facts from your audience or giving misleading information are unforgivable acts in a communication process. The entire purpose of communication is either lost or defeated when information is not presented correctly.

Clarity of ideas is what differentiates a mediocre communicator from an effective one. Ambiguity of ideas leads to confusion. For example consider this well-known illustration. A panda walked into a restaurant, ordered some bamboo shoots, ate them and then took out a revolver and began shooting at random. The waiter asked the panda why he did that. The panda opened a dictionary and said this is what I reading in the dictionary about myself: Panda: a mammal found in China. Eats, shoots and leaves. Said the Panda, I am being true to my style! A wrongly placed comma can cause, language and punctuation (in writing) is of utmost significance.

Another important principle in all oral communication is the KISS factor. We are talking about something more significant than lip-locking here and that is the slogan: Keep It Short, Stupid: There is nothing more boring in this world than a long-winded lecture by a windbag or a long essay that never gets to the point. All of us have suffered such lectured at some point in our student lives where a boring professor droned on and on about god alone knew what! Or read an article that never comes to the point. Now that we have a chance to be on the other side pf the podium, do not digress, keep to the time allowed, and be considerate of the audience by keeping the presentation short and sweet.

Courtesy in the communication process is like salt in your food. Without it everything is tasteless. Your tone, whether in speaking or writing, must always be polite and considerate. While beginning a speech, it is convention to thank the audience for coming to listen to you speak. While writing a letter, it is again part of convention to thank the receiver for a prompt reply, or for interest shown in your company or whatever the context may call for. Whether you are speaking or unlikely to receive a courteous reply to a rude letter or email and similarly no body is going to sit quietly through an impolite presentation or speech.

While in the forthcoming chapters you will come across several dos and don'ts, let me take this opportunity to make a list of the most obvious, yet crucial dos and don's:

- ◆ Do speak clearly (judge the acoustics of the room).
- ◆ Don't rush or deliberately talk slow.
- ◆ Don't tell jokes that are culturally offensive or gender biased.
- ◆ Don't speak in monotones (vary speed, pitch, and tone).
- ◆ Do maintain eye contact (do not look at only one individual).
- ◆ Do keep an eye on audience's body language (watch audience reactions)
- ◆ Do keep appearance clean and professional.
- ◆ Don't move around too much (i.e., pacing or nervous twitches).
- ◆ Don't talk to your visual aids.
- ◆ Do be enthusiastic and confident (it will reflect in your presentation).

And above all, SMILE your way through presentation. It will take you miles ahead in whatever you do!

LISTENING AS A TOOL

We often take listening for granted, never realizing that it is a skills that can be learnt. Everyone wins with beneficial listening.

Watch people who listen attentively. They make eye contact and focus on the speaker while listen. They listen with their eyes as much as with their ears, taking in all that the person is saying and nodding or making attentive noises from time-to-time. Even the persons speaking feel a sense of communication.

Active, effective listening is a habit, as well as the foundation of effective communication. It focuses on the person you are listening to, whether in a group or a one-on-one, in order to understand what he is saying. As the listener, you should then be able to repeat in your own words what the speaker has said, and to his satisfaction. This does not mean you agree with, but rather understand, what he is saying.

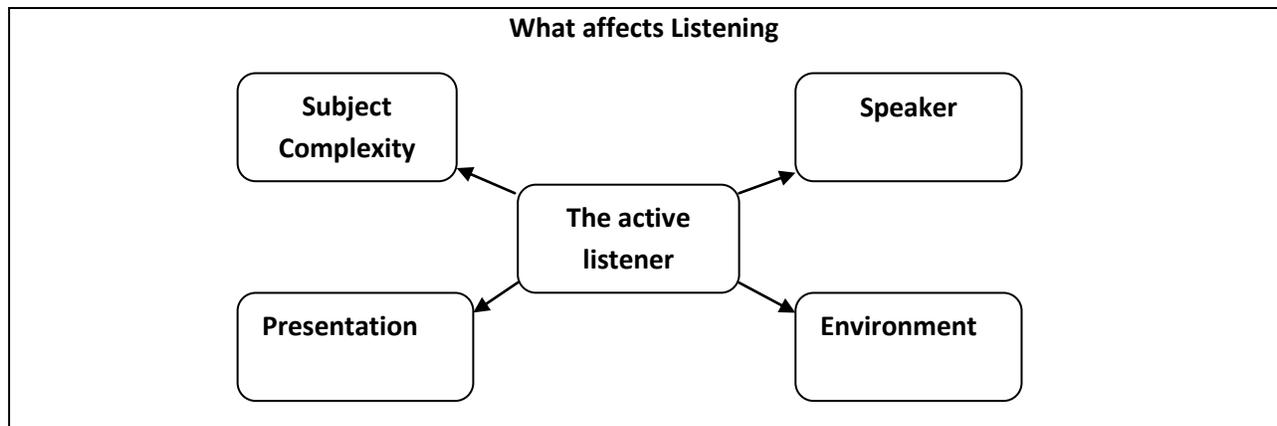
Food For Thought

"We were given two ears but only one moth, because listening is twice as hard as talking." Most of us do not realize the importance of listening as a communicative tool. Yet studies have shown that we actually spend 50% more times listening than we do talking.

External Factors

Some of the external factors that influence effective listening are:

- What do you think of the subject matter?
- Is it new or have you a lost of experience with it?
- Will it be difficult to understand, or simple?
- Is it important to you, or just fun?
- Is the speaker experienced or nervous?
- What are the non-verbal cues of the speaker?
- What frame of mind is he or she in?
- How personable, threatening, intelligent is the speaker?
- Is the voice volume too low to be heard?
- Is the speaker making the message too complex, either by including too much unnecessary details or too many issues?
- Is he getting lost, forgetting his point or the purpose of the interaction?
- Is his body language or nonverbal cues contradicting or interfering with the verbal message, for example, does he smile when angry or hurt?
- Is he too concerned with how the other person is taking the message, or how the person might react?
- Is the message illustrated with visuals or examples?
- Is technology used effectively?
- Are concepts introduced incrementally, or with examples?



The Listener

As a listener we can work on the listening process in the following ways:

- ◆ **Focus on the Subject**
Stop all irrelevant activities beforehand to orient yourself to the speaker or the topic.
- ◆ **Briefly review your knowledge on the subject Mater**
Make sure all relevant material is organized in advance (previous lectures, TV program, Newspaper articles, web sites, prior real life experience, etc.)
- ◆ **Avoid Distractions**
Seat yourself appropriately close to the speaker. Avoid distractions (a window, a talkative neighbor, noise, etc.)
- ◆ **Take control of your emotional state**
Suspend emotions until later or passively participate unless you can control your emotions.
- ◆ **Keep Your prejudices and your opinions aside**
You are there to learn what the speaker has to say, not impose your views on him.

Basic Modes of Listening

There are three basic kinds of listening:

In **Passive listening** our focus is on listening but not on verifying. We do not express our understanding of what the speaker says. Passive listening involves techniques, which encourages the person to continue talking, without directing the person actively.

Combative Listening happens when we either listen for opening to take the floor, or for weak points when we may attack the speaker. This happens more often when we are interested in getting our own point across rather than understanding someone else 's view.

Active listening involves the process of feedback. The listener is genuinely interested in what the speaker is feeling and thinking; he review his understanding of the subject before reacting, and recapitulates it in his own words, and then responds to it. He does not evaluate, offer opinions, advise, analyze or interrogate. We all act and respond on the basis of our understanding, and too often there is a misunderstanding that neither party in the conversation is aware of. With active listening, if a misunderstanding has occurred, it will be known immediately.

There is a distinction between **hearing words** and **listening for the message**. We are effective listeners only in the latter case. You need to place yourself in the speaker's shoes and look at the world through his eyes in order to understand his perspective. You cannot remain a passive listener if you wish to be an active participant. You need to be actively involved in the communication process. If your friend is telling you how hurt she was by something, and you focus only on the facts of the situation without acknowledging her feelings, she is likely to become even more upset.

Active listening has three phases:

1. Listening
2. Understanding
3. Responding

There are four main responses:

1. To **reflect** on the feelings or the underlying feelings.
2. To **restate** what was heard in other words – and then **reflect** on the content of what was said.
3. Asking appropriate **questions**.
4. **Summarizing** what has been heard.

1. Reflection involves focusing on the speaker's feelings.

"You sound so upset."

"You appear to be absolutely exhausted."

Even exploring underlying feelings helps at times:

"I guess that made you rather annoyed."

2. Restatement involves absorbing what you just heard and expressing/putting it in your own words.

Speaker: "The child was frightfully upset."

Listener: "It appears as though the authorities are a bit too strict."

If your understanding is wrong, the speaker will correct you. This technique helps in exploring the problem.

3. Questioning helps the person talk and opens the path to communication.

Always remember, feelings come before facts, and the person is more important than the problem. There are several types of questions that elicit subjective answers and mostly cannot be answered by "yes" or "no".

Ask open-ended questions, such as:

"Can you explain what you meant by...?"

"Do you mean that...?"

"How often does this happen?"

"How do you want me to help you?"

Place hypothetical situations such as

"Suppose we made this project, how would the teacher react?"

The Role of Silence

Silence mostly makes us uncomfortable. Long phases of silence prompt us into uttering the first thing that comes to our mind, which may be irrelevant. This must be avoided. However, silence also gives both the speaker and the listener a chance to think things through.

4. Summarising

Summarizing is assimilating what has been heard, briefly going over it together, and agreeing on the problem and the next course of action. This, when resorted to by doctors, is a great comfort to the patient, primarily because he feels understood.

Some of the **benefits** of active listening are:

- It helps people to spot the flaws in their reasoning when they hear it played back without criticism.
- Active listening helps people become less afraid of negative feelings. It promotes a warm relationship between people and helps to solve problems.
- Sometimes a person just needs to be heard and acknowledged before he is willing to consider an alternative or soften his/her position.
- If we accurately understand the other person's view, we can be more effective in helping.
- Active listening helps identify areas of agreement, so that the areas of disagreement are put in perspective and are diminished rather than magnified.

So, after your next important conversation, test your ability to benefit from listening to that conversation. Analyze and ask yourself:

Who did more listening?

What did I learn from the other person(s)?

Did anyone interrupt?

What questions should I have asked?

What questions should I have answered more thoroughly?

Was I absolutely certain I understood everything?

Did I ask for clarification?

Did I practice acknowledgement?

Did he or she practice acknowledgement?

Were both parties attending?

Was the conversation balanced?

Did anyone keep changing the subject?

Did anyone get angry?

Did anyone appear sad?

Was everyone paying attention?

What will I do different in my next conversation?

The ability to listen is a skill that can be honed with practice and time. This skill can and will improve all your relationships with friends, mates, partners, children, and co-workers, even your boss!

NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non Verbal communication as the name implies is when communication takes place without the use of words. Body language, the size of an office, the dress, how long you keep your visitor waiting, your expressions, the gestures,- all these communicate power, position, distance, familiarity or friendliness, pleasure or displeasure etc.

It is a very effective and potent medium of communication and needs a lot of careful thought and schooling. It can be easily misinterpreted and therefore needs a lot of consideration.

- ◆ Body Language – Body Movement
- ◆ Eye Contact
- ◆ Facial Expression,
- ◆ Gesture
- ◆ Posture
- ◆ Spatial Relativity
- ◆ Paralanguage

These are some of the areas of non-verbal communication that are explored in this module.

a)Body Language- Body Movement: We communicate not just with words, but the whole of our being.

The way you use or don't use or misuse your body, in conversation can hardly go unnoticed. Each shrug, raise of the eyebrow, lopsided smirk, radiant smile, conveys a message; a message which is far more potent and significant than the use of words. When we use words we have an advantage, if tend to speak something we did not mean or intend to, we could always apologize and correct ourselves.

But body language is non-reversible. How would you reverse an offensive yawn, a disinterested slump? This is especially more so, when you aren't aware of your body talking. Positive **body language**, can earn you rich rewards. Even when you aren't saying a word, you are sending very distinct messages to other people. Your eyes, your gestures, your posture and the space around you are all communicators.

Today's scenario is all about selling. Everyone has something or the other to sell and wants to lure the highest bidder. Have you noticed a model selling clothes? See her body language; notice that no words are used. If the designer desires an elegant look, she will mould her body accordingly. Her expression will be demure, her gait swinging and rhythmic. If it's a saucy and racy look that is needed, she has a mischievous gleam in her eye, a naughty smile on her lips, a brisk confident walk. When needed, she drools oodles of sex appeal, with an inviting look in her eyes, and lilting smile, or a sexy pout on her face, a graceful walk. NO words are needed. Ensembles worth crores are sold only through appropriate body language. Now this is a very eloquent example of **body language**.

When your words don't match the signals that your body is sending, others will believe what they see, more than what they hear. That is why it is said it is not just 'what' you say that is important but 'how' you say it, and how you *listen* when somebody else is having their say, that matters. Understanding body language will enhance your professionalism. Having a positive **body language**, means more than half the battle is won.

b) Eye Contact: When talking or listening to somebody, lock your eyes with him/her. This is not to say that you disconcertingly stare at the poor chap. Frank and earnest eye-contact is a must in any communication, at whatever level, no matter what the topic of discussion might be. Fleeting and poor eye contact, staring into space or the wall, looking down, construes a kind of underhandedness, not only that, it dissuades the other person from sharing information. It shows you are not interested, or worse you are not somebody who values integrity and honesty in your dealings. Unwittingly you may downplay your intelligence as well. Steady eye contact reveals your intelligence and sharpness of perception. Poor eye contact also reduces your confidence levels. Also, you come across as a person who is incapable of inspiring confidence in anybody else. However in some cultures lowering your eyes when you talk is taken as a sign of deference. Culture sensitivity is needed when interpreting non verbal communication. Eyes are indeed a mirror to your soul and your mind too. The way you talk with your eyes, is more voluble the way you use words.

c) Facial expressions:

- *A Smile:* A smile is the most volatile, expressive opening that you could ever have to any communication. As a facial expression it is the most expansive, encompassing tool in your kitty; your unerring, every ready ally. Included everyone present in your radiant smile and see miracles happen. A genuine smile can open doors, that hard talk can't, same way a plastic smile, is the biggest put off.
- *A Smirk:* smirking can be the most irritating facial expression. Especially in a business environment it exhibits arrogance and unwillingness.
- *Knitting your brows:* though knitting of brows is usually done when somebody is concentrating hard on the matter at hand, it is not a very positive facial expression. It contorts your features and makes you come across as unapproachable and distant. When you are poring through material, which requires intense concentration in a meeting, keep you face relaxed. Don't knit your brows, when you come across something unsavory, or something you cannot comprehend. It's best to open up and ask for clarification.
- *Gritting your teeth:* I don't need to tell you how big a NO this particular expression can be. We all face particularly excruciatingly situations in the course of our working day or otherwise. Most of us cannot suffer fools gladly. It is very difficult to control yourself at such times. Do not grit your teeth. Remain calm and cool. Your relaxed and empathetic expression will defuse some of the tension. Then go ahead... smile. Yes you read it right, a smile can work wonders inside you, and it completely relaxes you, the matter stops looking so despairingly irritating after a smile.
- *Raising a brow:* When you are talking and somebody raises a brow, it could mean there is a question in the offing. It could also be a disbelieving stance, something like "Oh yeah...I don't believe it, but if

you say so..." when you see the person across do that, that time to stop and take stock of what you just said. It might help to revamp it or At least rephrase it.

- **Yawning:** We've all been through this one, the insuppressible urge to yawn, in the middle of an important conversation. Yes, we all know, it is a biological need: the body crying out for more oxygen, but this isn't enough to save your skin. In spite of all the talks of being more relaxed and expressive, you still don't have the luxury of yawning when you feel like it. Needless to say it comes off as you are bored and can't wait for the whole thing to end.
- **Making faces:** Many of have this habit of making faces, when we are ill at ease, or when things don't fit in to our sense of rightness. We unwittingly contort our faces, unaware of how big a put off it is, to the people around us.

Conclusion:- So smile and smile, smile when you start, smile when you end, smile when you are disbelieving, smile when things are not quite right. Be earnest and receptive and it will be expressed on your face.

d) Gestures: Talking without gestures is like a model in a shampoo ad without the wind in her hair. The right gestures add a lot of animation and spice to your style. Using your hands when you talk makes your material livelier, emphatic, and captivating. However over use, and too expansive gestures are distracting, and look very funny and affected. So don't go overboard. A handshake for example speaks volumes about your levels of comfort, warmth, confidence. Stuffing your hands in your pockets carries a pejorative sense of being non-complying. Wet, cold and clammy hands like the notorious Uriah Heep in Dicken's David Copperfield can be repulsive. Especially in an interview the interviewer can read a lot from a single handshake.

Gestures are also culture specific. In our Indian culture, we fold our hands and welcome and show our reverence (Namaste). It echoes warmth and camaraderie. Latin Americans and Italians use a lot of gestures, it makes their speech warm and animated. North Europeans are relatively colder. In some cultures warm hugs and even kissing is considered a welcome gesture exuding positivism. However in many others, it is taboo. Nodding your head when listening communicates positive reinforcement to listeners and indicates that you are listening empathetically.

Folding your arms across your chest can mean a variety of things, none of them positive. You might appear to be hiding something or protecting yourself in an unpleasant situation. You could seem disinterested. Most often, folded arms signal disagreement. It is also shows rigidity and a much closed unreceptive outlook towards the world in general.

e) Posture and body orientation: You communicate numerous messages by the way you walk, talk, stand and sit. Standing erect, but not rigid, and leaning slightly forward communicates to the listeners that you are approachable, receptive and friendly.

Make sure you sit straight, without slumping, or do not rest your head on your hands as if it can't support itself. Your gait reveals your personality as well. Graceful, brisk and even strides make you can depend on. A slow lumber, dragging your feet, meandering can be very disenchanting.

f) Space and Proximity: Cultural norms dictate a comfortable distance for interaction with people. It is very disconcerting to have your personal space invaded. In a business interaction, maintain a comfortable distance. Look for tell tale signs like drumming of fingers, gaze aversion, tapping, etc and tune yourself as much as possible trying to make the opposite person comfortable. Leaning slightly forward, when speaking or listening, is construed as a positive stance. But in all circumstances a person's personal space should definitely not be invaded. A corner office, with a large area and a closed door connotes more authority and power than a desk in a common area. But in Japan only the highest executives will have their own offices, and that too having their desks in common areas.

g) Para linguistics: paralanguage is communication that goes beyond the specific spoken words. It includes pitch, amplitude, rate, and voice quality of speech. It also includes, emoticons (in case of e-mails). Paralanguage reminds us that people convey their feelings not only in what they say, but also in how they say it. This facet of non-verbal communication includes elements like tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness and inflection. Make sure you do not talk in a monotone, because however

interesting the content might be, it will be lost on your audience. Varying these elements when conversing, or public speaking can make a whole world difference to your text. Not only that it can make or break your speech.

Paralanguage” also means short sounds that are used to show your feelings are so strong and instantaneous that you simply cannot convey them via words. It works by way of reflex action. They are sounds, not words, but many a times they carry more weight than words.

For Example, we say “Ouch” to express pain.
“Ouch, I hit my finger with the hammer.”

Thus non-verbal communication occupies a large chunk of our daily interactions with people. Interpersonal skills is not just about using your words: the right word, at the right time, in the right place, but it is also about not using the word. To reiterate, we must remember at all times that we communicate with our whole body, our whole being. Make your positive non-verbal communication your most dependable ally in the bewildering, sometimes befuddling, but always fascinating world of effective communication.

NEGOTIATION

Food for Thought

The first human instinct displayed by a child across all sect, creed, race and culture is probably that of **Negotiation**. Consider a small example. A toddler stands in front of a toy rack in a supermarket and insists on having a model car. The mother checks the price, decides not to spend so much money and refuses to buy it. Much to her embarrassment, the child starts screaming and crying. The mother is firm and pretends to walk away from the store. Finally the child notices a box of chocolates and urges the mother to buy it. The harassed mother finds the product within her budget and decided to buy it. The deal is made!!!

The first lesson on negotiation is learnt instinctively.

Negotiating is an art that impacts every dimension of human life. Whether as an employer, family member or business associate, we all negotiate for things each day like higher salary, better service or solving a dispute with a coworker or family member.

In search of a definition...

Negotiation can be defined as the process by which two or more parties each of whom have something the other wants, reach an agreement or a mutually acceptable outcome.

Types of Negotiations

Since negotiation touches every dimension of life, it is best classified based on the outcomes. It is on the basis of these outcomes that the preparation. Approach, course and nature of negotiation will be determined. Some of the typical negotiation types in an organizational context are:

Day to day (managerial): As the name suggests. This type of negotiation is typically the day-to-day negotiation that goes on internally in an organization. The parties involved could be the management and employees negotiating on incentive structure, the boss and subordinate trying to define roles and responsibilities, the trade-union leader and Industrial Relations manager negotiating pay-terms and working conditions or even different functional groups in an organisation such as logistics and sales, negotiation that goes on internally in an organization. The parties involved could be the management and employees negotiating on incentive structure, the boss and subordinate trying to define roles and responsibilities, the trade-union leader and Industrial Relations manager negotiating pay-terms and

working conditions or even different functional groups in an organisation such as logistics and sales, negotiating the mode of dispatch of goods.

This kind of negotiation is most often carried out between the parties that are directly impacted by the outcome of the negotiation.

Commercial negotiation: This kind of negotiation is typically carried out between two organisations where the driving factor between the two parties is commercial gain. Examples of such negotiations are those that occur between a buyer organisation and the supplier of goods or services, between a sales representative and a retailer or between a distribution head and the C & F agent.

Legal negotiation: These negotiations pertain to formal and legally binding issues-as between a manufacturing organisation and the local government on issues of compliance, or between two heads of state on bilateral issues, or even between two attorneys fighting the cause of a client party outside the court.

This kind of negotiation is most often carried out between parties that represent a group or organisation or country etc., where the negotiators may or may not be affected directly by the outcome of the negotiation.

In this chapter, however, we restrict our discussion to the first two types of negotiation. Legal negotiations are driven by elaborate governing norms and are therefore much beyond the scope of this book.

Attaining the Win-Win: The heart of all negotiations

Let us look at the definition again. It states that a negotiation is successful if it culminates in a mutually acceptable agreement. In fact, a negotiation is an outstanding success if circumstances have improved for everyone, and a positive, working relationship has been established.

This can be explained in a simple grid. If we map the propensity to satisfy the self needs of one of the parties in a negotiation along the X axis, and the inclination to satisfy the needs of the opponent on the Y axis, on the same low to high scale, we will see 5 distinct possibilities arising out of any negotiation:

- **Lose-lose:** An agreement, which is low in satisfying the needs of either party, is very unstable and will not be implemented at all. Such negotiations are completely avoidable. For Example, a negotiation between an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) and its vendor which neither satisfies the price expectations of the vendor nor the delivery schedule of the OEM.
- **Win-win:** An agreement that satisfies the needs of both parties is a collaborative negotiation. Such agreements are easy to solemnize and have the highest buy-in from both the negotiating parties. This is the most desirable outcome of a negotiation and such outcome is likely to stand the test of time. For example, Merger of companies; agreeable price and time-schedules of delivery leading to the appointment of an exclusive vendor by the client OEM.
- **Midway:** Negotiations that lead to agreements that are midway in satisfying the needs of both the participating parties also get revisited fast. This is because both parties feel compromised by the outcome. For example, vendor negotiation in a highly regulated market. In a government-regulated market, the vendor cannot command the price he wants for which there are quality compromise that the OEM has to accept.
- **Win-lose and Lose-win:** In these negotiations, one party feels highly compromised. Outcomes of such negotiations are unstable. The party that has yielded does so in dire straits or under a situational threat but looks for every opportunity to get even. In our daily life such negotiations happen all the while in our enthusiasm to strike a bargain. Every negotiation can be mapped in the above grid.

Satisfying others' needs	W-L Yield		W-W Collaborating
		Midway Compromise	
	L-L Avoiding		L-W Competing
Satisfying Self needs			

It is important to remember that at least some aspects of a well-negotiated agreement should exceed every party's initially anticipated outcome. In order to build solutions that improve on initial expectations, one must devise creative solutions that do more than meet concrete demands.

It is necessary to add here that contrary to popular belief, a win-win negotiation doesn't mean that everyone wins equally. The practical outcome of one's negotiation is not a 50-50 split of the spoils. One may gain substantially more, or substantially less than the other party involved, meaning specifically that:

- Some of the needs have been met more successfully than they could have been without the negotiation.
- No compromise has been made that determines the potential for anyone to profit from the agreement.

Stages of negotiations:

A negotiation process goes through 4 important stages:

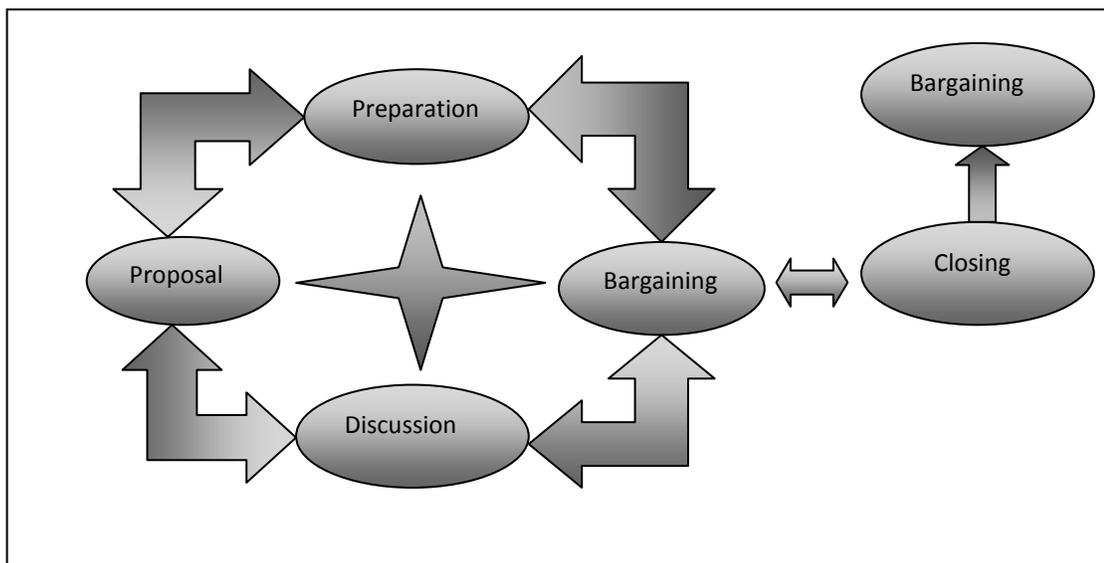
Preparation: Doing the groundwork to meet for negotiation

Proposal: Putting forward the objective of the negotiation

Discussion & Bargain: Responding to a proposal so as to maximize satisfaction of self-needs.

Closing: Arriving at a mutually acceptable agreement.

Note that the flow of steps is unidirectional and any aberration to this flow can lead to a breakdown in negotiation.



Tricks of the Trade

- Know Thyself
- Do Your Homework
- Practice Double and Triple Think-anticipating what the other party wants (double think) and also what the other party thinks you want (triple think).
- Build Trust
- Develop External Listening-do not carry on an inner dialogue with yourself so that you don't miss any important nonverbal messages, facial expressions or voice inflections.
- Enjoy the Process

Preparation

Preparation is a stage prior to facing each other at the negotiation table. The more comfortable you are with your pre-negotiation status, the easier it will be to present your interests firmly during the negotiation.

a. Clarify your Objective

You should first determine your own objective for the negotiation. This is only possible if you can introspect and analyze your own needs.

b. Classify Your Priority

Needs are not defined your needs comprise everything that it takes to improve on your present circumstances. Once you prioritize your needs you will be able to draw your alternatives for the negotiation. This was best explained through a research on negotiation conducted by the Harvard Negotiation Project. It is called **BATNA**, an acronym for **Best Alternative to A Negotiated Agreement**. If you look at it from the simplest standpoint, your BATNA is the choice you can make if you conclude that negotiating with a particular party is not likely to yield a favourable result. You can walk away from a negotiation if your BATNA is better than the likely outcome of that negotiation. BATNAs are not always readily apparent. Fisher and Ury outline a simple process for determining your NATNA:

1. Develop a list of actions you might Conceivably take if no agreement is reached;
2. Improve upon some of the more promising ideas and convert them into practical options; and
3. Select, tentatively, the one option that seems best.

c. Learn about your opponent

After investigating and delineating your own interests and alternatives, you should begin to learn as much as you can about the other party's needs. This involves finding out not only what they want, but also what specifically motivates their desires. If it is evident that you understand their needs, and you are likely to be viewed as an open and fair negotiator. Prior knowledge of others' needs can help you develop satisfying options and agreements.

Information gathering should not be limited uncovering facts.

Body language, personal style, and even questions that you're asked can lend important insight into a person's or group's interests. You might also learn about their communication style and problem-solving approach. All information, no matter how marginal it may seem, can be used to mould your approach.

Information gathering might include any or all of the following.

- ✓ Studying the history of an organisation. This adds perspective to your expected negotiation format and outcome. Do not limit yourself to what you find in print. Conversation can be even more telling.
- ✓ Discussing the issues with "non-negotiating" members of the organisation. Often, individuals with no apparent ties to the discussions can be very influential in affecting the outcome.

- ✓ Talking outside the formal setting with the individuals involved in the negotiation. It is nearly always worthwhile to take time to develop a relaxed and comfortable dynamics. A solid relationship creates trust, which, in turn, tends to unlock abundant information.

Significance of Preparation

A full arsenal of knowledge can give you a few added benefits as well. First, people with whom you negotiate are likely, at some point, to aggressively assert their positions, or even make demands. Knowing the criteria and methodology used to arrive at these positions can help you focus discussion on interests that underlie demands.

Information also affords you the most likely mechanism for sidestepping a stalemate. You can open a whole new realm of opportunities for yourself by bringing such new information to the table as shows you can meet some need of the other party, something which they never thought would be addressed in the negotiations. Deadlocks are most easily broken when additional needs are “discovered” for either side. Whoever was on the verge of cutting off negotiations is allowed to reconsider without appearing to be weak. Negotiations are continued, not because someone made a massive concession to break the dead lock, but because new information was presented that proved all options hadn’t yet been fully explored.

Making the proposal

The job of negotiators, once everyone’s interests are fully clear, is to begin developing and presenting options that maximize everyone’s gain. Note that options need not be fully developed prior to beginning negotiations. If all parties explicitly agree to participate in the process, group brainstorming of options can harvest abundant possibilities. Not all options suggested need to be fully plausible. The power of brainstorming lies in the ability of one idea to act as a catalyst for another. In this respect all ideas are equally valuable. The ideas that should be held onto, however, are those that meet the needs of all involved more effectively than could have been accomplished without negotiating.

Discussion and Bargaining

This stage involves responding to the proposal and facilitating brainstorming. Before responding to a proposal, seek clarification in areas of ambiguity.

At this stage you will often notice the opposing party using ploys to hamper a proposal. A ploy is a tactic to gain supremacy during negotiation, that is, gain benefit by conceding the least. A ploy is employed to distract discussion from the main issue, to shift emphasis of the negotiation and often to push towards a close, too soon.

Some of the ploys and simple methods to counter them have been provided in the chart.

Ploy	Countering Tactic
Making threats	Say you cannot act under duress
Offering insults	Stay calm, warn them that they need to be constructive to take this forward.
Bluffing	Counter the bluff with evidence
Using intimidations	Be steadfast on your proposal
Divide and rule	Brief team members in advance
Use leading questions	Avoid answering
Emotional appeal	Affirm your commitment to the proposal
Testing boundary	Be clear in your terms and reaffirm them

Closing

Closing is the harbinger of future relationships with the negotiating party. Closure of a discussion is best achieved by attaining a Win-Win situation.

Tips for successful negotiation:

In daily life, one undergoes many negotiations: here are 7 tips for successful negotiations:

1. Know Thyself

When you go into a negotiation, take a personal inventory. How do you feel about negotiation? Do you want to get over with it fast? If so, you may give in too quickly, or give away too much. Or, do you want to win, no matter what the cost? If so, you may become adversarial and damage the relationship. And most importantly define your BATNA.

2. Do your Home Work

Know whom you're negotiating with before you begin. What's his or her reputation as a negotiator?

3. Practice Double and Triple Think

It's not enough to know what you want out of negotiation. You also need to anticipate what the other party want (double think). The smart negotiator also tries to anticipate what the other party thinks you want (triple think).

4. Build Trust

Negotiation is a highly sophisticated form of communication. Without trust, there won't be communication. Honor your commitments. Tell the truth. Respect confidences.

5. Develop External Listening

Most people carry on an inner dialogue with themselves. When you're trying to communicate with someone else, this inner dialogue becomes a problem because you can't listen internally and externally at the same time. When you negotiate, only listen externally. You won't miss important nonverbal messages or facial expressions or voice inflections when you listen externally.

6. Own Your Power

Don't assume that because the other party has a power of position and is therefore all-powerful. That's giving away from your power! Your power is your level of self-esteem, and self-confidence.

7. Enjoy the Process

Negotiation is a process, not an event. There are predictable steps to it. With practice, you will gain skill at facilitating each step of the process. As your skill increases, you'll discover negotiating can be fun.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Christine Stuart in her book, 'Effective Speaking' cites a survey in the USA where 3,000 adults were asked to list their ten worst fears. Speaking in Public came out as the number one fear-even above fears of financial ruin and death!

So, what is it about this phrase and phase called public speaking that's so very scary? It is daunting because it is you out there, the real you, not some acquired self as in the case of an actor on stage who plays a make-believe role. In public speaking, you reveal your true self; therefore, it is like having your veneer pulled off. It is the fear of being exposed. It is the fear of making a fool of yourself in front of an audience.

But fear you not.

The good news is that learning to speak in public is like learning to cook: anyone can do it-and almost anyone can do it well.

Good public speaking like good food needs a good and a willing cook i.e. a willing speaker. Whether you have been forced, coerced, persuaded, threatened, bribed, tempted or obliged, you are up there. You have chosen to speak. So you might as well make yourself a willing speaker and sound a lot better, effective and most importantly entertaining and interesting, rather than groan in the microphone and tell your audience that you didn't want to be there. Well in that case, even your audience doesn't want to be there.

Just like good food, a good speech also needs the right ingredients. That is your content- a very striking beginning a gripping middle and an "I will stay with you for a long time" kind of an end. The right ingredients for this maybe a bit of humor, recent facts, loads of information on the topic, the audiences etc. last but not the least if you are a novice in the kitchen there is nothing like a good cook book to help you conjure a delicious, lip smacking dish. I hope this chapter serves as a cool guide, for anyone who would like to give a speech with a thunderous applause.

LEARNING THE FUNDAMENTALS

1. Set your main objective: Why are you going to speak? Surprisingly, most speakers often overlook this million-dollar question. Establish your main aim behind delivering this particular speech. Jot it down. Remember the reason is different from the topic. Your topic might be "Mercy Killing", your objective could be "Convincing doctors that the patient should have the right to request his own end." Once this is achieved, you cannot go wrong. You will spare yourself the gravest sin of public speaking, the sin which the most accomplished of them often commit: deviating from the topic and the objective. Once you have decided on that make sure every sentence that you write somehow builds your argument and strengthens it.

You must be absolutely sure of why you are going to speak. What do I want this audience to do or think because of my speech?

2. Know your audience: once you are sure about your objective, know your audience. Only then can you be RELEVANT which is THE most important requirements for public speaking. If you want to hold the attention of your audience, speak about what matters to them.

If you do not get a chance to know your audience well, before you are actually on stage you could try something like this:

"Hi, I am Anil Sharma and I am the chairman of The Parents-Teachers Association. I understand some of you have come here to address issues regarding kindergarten children, would you raise your hands please... Thank you. And those of you who have come here to tackle the Primary school Building problem, would you please raise your hands...Thank you!

AN AUDIENCE FRIENDLY SPEECH WILL ALWAYS GO DOWN BETTER THAN A SCHOLARLY SPEECH ADDRESSED AT BEST TO YOUR OWN SELF AND WORSE, TO NOBODY IN PARTICULAR.

3. Last but certainly the most crucial point, do not overstay your welcome. End your speech before the audiences expect you to. If you are speaking for a contest or a competition, observe the time limit strictly. In that case, do not end too early or it will look like you ran out of things to say.

As John Bowden, an author and a professional trainer and senior lecturer in communication skills very aptly said, "Don't suffer from the illusion that you can make your speech immortal by making it everlasting".

MAKING YOUR SPEECH

1. **Do not shoot facts, give messages.** Many speakers that we come across, and even good ones, end up sounding verbose and artificial. They give so many facts in an effort to sound well rehearsed and learned that the effect of those facts is numbing. Listeners respond more to messages than facts.

For example instead of saying,

“This is the statistics of rape and homicide in India
Year 1998: Rapes xxxxx
Murders xxxxx
1999 Rapes xxxxx
Murders xxxx etc.”,

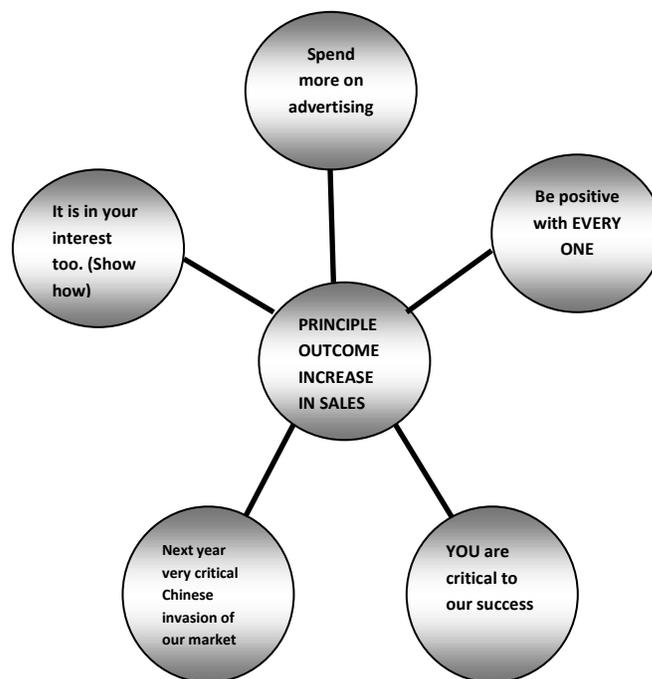
It is much more effective when you say

“Even as we are sitting here in air conditioned comfort and airing our *concern* for the alarming crime rate taking place in our city let us not forget since the time I started my speech that is in the last five minute three human beings have been killed, and four women are being raped right now. Two of them could be minors...”

Figures do give authenticity and add flair to your speech, but make sure you present them in an interesting manner. ***Make sure they affect the audience.***

2. **What ground will you need to cover to elicit an emotional response from your audience?**

Before you start making your speech, stick your core message on a yellow note on your computer screen. Your message must be the heart of your speech. Mind map your speech. Do not start from the beginning. Draw a circle and put your core message in the centre. Connect all the points you can think of to the circle. Encircle your points too. Suppose you are to speak to your sales staff, and your major intention behind giving the speech is to bring about an increase in the sales by motivating your employees. You will have something like this...



Now you have a mind map to your main and sub points. You can sit and arrange these points in order of priority.

3. **Give the speech a good beginning.** Sir Thomas Beecham, talking about an orchestra once remarked “the great thing is to begin together and end together, what happens in between does not matter very much”. Of course, this was a tongue in cheek statement, but it is true to some extent as far as public speaking is concerned provided of course the middle is accurate and relevant

The aim of your opening is to arouse the interest of the audience and to whet their appetite so they are eager for more. Although there are no limits to innovative ways of starting a speech, for beginners, ‘tried and tested ways’ work best.

- a. Humorous openings:- This is a very effective way. A smile or a laugh is like measles, it spreads and there is no better way to break the ice. The flip side here is humour can be biting too. Make sure your humour is at nobody’s expense...certainly not in bad taste for somebody sitting in the audience. The current fad of cracking “Sardarji” jokes is a very stupid thing to do in an audience where somebody’s sentiments might be hurt. You would be wiser to substitute ‘Santa Singh’ with any man like Tom, Dick or Harry.
- b. Starting with a question:- This can stimulate the listeners’ interest and set them thinking. You may have a serious and important point to make, and a challenging opening question may be the simplest and the best way of leading to it:

“Have we ever tried to find out why the public sector company Jessop, a Rs. 2400 crore company was sold for Rs. 18 crore when it had Rs. 14 crore in its bank account? Or, for that matter why were the VSNL stakes sold to the TATAs for Rs. 1500 crore when the cash assets they get in return amount to Rs. 1100 crore?”

- c. Hard hitting statements:- Yet another way of starting a good speech would be to make a hard-hitting statement. Instead of the usual and boring figures and statistics, you could try putting it like this.

“If all the food grains lying unused in our warehouses were to be placed in gunny bags and placed one after the other, it would make a path to the moon and back. Yet this country bears the cross of over 200 million starving Indians.”

This particular statements from ‘The Great Indian Dream’ would serve as a wonderful beginning to a speech that seeks to portray India as the rich poor country. Check out the visionary detail the sentence provides.

You could also use something like this from the same book...

“When capacity utilization fell from 85% to 70% during the 1930s in America, it caused the Great Depression. What do we do but bemoan our capacity utilization of 60%...”

- d. Quotations and Poems:-
Mary had a little car
She drove in manner deft.
But every time she signaled left
The little car went left!

This one would serve as a humorous beginning to an afternoon ladies session, where you are called to improve the driving skills o woman drivers! Remember to keep the limerick short and simple. As far as quotations go, the Bard of Avon is an all time favourite of mine because you could easily connect it to your message.

O! it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant!
-William Shakespeare (measure for Measure)

All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than the others.
-George Orwell (Animal Farm)

There is no dearth of such brilliant quotations and poems, which you could cull from the Internet or books and use them as effective beginnings.

4. How you end your speech is equally important. Set about making each point, as interesting and relevant as possible, and clinch it all in a striking end.

You could use all the above tricks as endings too. Do not forget to clinch your beginning in your end. It produces a very neat effect to end at the very point you started. Offer a solution or a recommendation at the end, and let it always be an optimistic end. Remember ending is your last attempt to woo your audience; it is what they carry home with them.

Check out this ending from a speech by Richard Nixon: "...Our destiny offers not the cup of despair but the chalice of opportunity. So let us seize it, not in fear, but in gladness – and "riders on the earth together", let us go forward, firm in our faith, steadfast in our purpose, cautious of the dangers: but sustained by our confidence in the will of God and the promise of man.

Now that you have jotted down a captivating beginning, a comprehensive, relevant and interesting middle, and an impressive and memorable end, it is time to write your final script. Yes, you read it right. No matter how good you are at making speeches, always write your *full* speech.

Memorize the beginning and the end.

Shortlist the key words of the middle. Mentally divide the middle into points and remember the subheading of each point. You could jot these down on fist-sized cards or a single card and carry it with you. I would say it is better to write it out on a single card, that way you are not required to fumble for it in your nervousness.

Rehearse your speech...in front of your family, your friends, your bathroom, and your mirror at any opportunity you get. Sir Winston Churchill, the world's greatest orator, used to rehearse his speeches aloud in his bathroom.

Once you are actually out there, forget the script. If you have rehearsed well, it will never desert you.

SOME WINNING TRICKS

- Speak as loudly as necessary. At the lowest pitch, everyone in the room should easily hear your voice without straining his ears. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance with microphone, you are expected to know your subject, not the mechanics of the mike and it is better to ask someone to adjust it than sounding like a hoarse croak.
- Vary your pitch and volume. Tonal variations are an absolute necessity. You don't want to sound like you are chanting mantras, or singing a lullaby. At the other extreme, too many variations may make you sound like an actor overacting his part.
- Do not stuff your hands in your pocket. You could lightly try holding the podium if it is at chest height. If not, let your hands at your sides, you could use them to gesticulate, you can even hold them together if that makes you comfortable, rubbing them together makes you look like you'd rather be somewhere else, so avoid it.

- Eye contact with the audience is a must. Make sure your whole delivery is targeted at everyone present.
- If you feel the need you, may pause to sip water if it has been kept near you, provided you don't break your own rhythm...for a long speech, it helps to keep your throat moist.
- The quality a public speaker needs more than anything else is zest. Be animated about your subject. Warmth generates warmth; if you want your audience to be eating out of your hand before you finish, speak with utter conviction and zest.
- Be your own censor. Respect the forum and the audience. Do not ever use bad language, no matter how informal the speech. You are the most responsible person at the venue, this responsibility has been vested in you by the audience, make sure you do not misuse it. Igniting minds is a nobler and more difficult prospect than inciting minds. Inciting minds is cheap and derogatory to say the least.

THE ART OF MAKING POWERFUL PRESENTATIONS

One of the worst fears that bother most of us is having to give a formal talk or presentation in public. It rates even higher than fears of financial ruin and death! Why do so many people feel anxious in this situation?

The main reasons appear to be:

- **Unfamiliar situation:** Since the frequency of speaking formally to an audience is low, the novelty of the situation is a cause of apprehension.
- **Lack of confidence:** This stems often from a feeling that others are better speakers than us, or that they know more about the topic in question.
- **Sense of isolation:** the speaker is alone, the centre of attraction – and vulnerable.
- **Self-consciousness:** About our accents, grammar, voice and image generally.
- **Fear of looking foolish:** We may worry that we will forget what we wanted to say, and will stumble over our words, will say the 'wrong' thing, etc.
- **Fear of consequences:** For example being 'judged' by others, particularly tutors, as lacking in ability or insight because of a poor public presentation.

These and other case-specific factors often make us extremely nervous about facing an audience, which at times becomes apparent even in our physical reactions- increased heart and breathing rates, increased adrenaline, over-rapid reactions, and a tension in the shoulder and neck area are frequent symptoms of those suffering from nervousness. These bodily changes can also affect the voice, making it sound tremulous, or disjointed by over-rapid breathing. Sometimes this prompts us into speaking more rapidly.

There are fortunately, certain things that you can do to bring your apprehensions under control:

- **Relax your body:** Take a deep breath, hold it, and then breathe out slowly. At the same time try and relax your arms, shoulders and hands – let them go floppy. Repeat this as often as you can before you start to speak.
- **Relax your voice:** Loosen your vocal cords by humming up and down the musical scale or going through vocal sounds.
- **Try and 'Defuse' the Situation:** Anxiety can be increased if you have to talk to people who appear threatening or intimidating to you in some way. If you are in a group, where all of you

will be taking turns in addressing an audience, tell yourself that the others are just as good or bad as you. Besides, if you have been asked to speak on a particular subject, you probably are better than most others on that one!

- **Practice:** There is no doubt that increasing experience in public speaking will help you overcome normal or moderate degrees of apprehension. Deliberately avoiding or trying to escape situations will only make you feel more anxious when you are finally, inevitably, confronted by that situation. Speaking regularly in public is the best antidote to 'nerves'. Begin by speaking in small informal groups.

Another effective way of gaining confidence is to telephone a local live radio phone-in show with your opinion on a current event. Success at putting your views succinctly and clearly over the airwaves will give your confidence a real boost!

- **Prepare:** Above all, you must prepare for the session. Much of the fear and apprehension can be considerably lessened by a thorough preparation of the material to be presented, and by organizing your ideas into notes.

EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

The essence of a successful presentation can be summarized by the three Ps of Planning, Preparation, and Practice. These not only put most of your fears to rest but also form the foundations for a really effective address, both in terms of content and presentation.

Planning

This involves setting your objective, considering the purpose of your presentation and the message you are trying to get across to your audience.

- Know your audience. How many will you be speaking to? Why will they be there? What is their prior knowledge? What are their expectations?
- Brainstorm to get your ideas down on paper and then select and order the points you want to make.
- Consider the time you have been allotted and how much you can reasonably say in that time.
- Decide how you are going to structure your presentation. You need to conceptualize an introduction, a body and a conclusion.
- The first four minutes are the time when you are likely to have the attention of your audience, it is important to make an impact with your introduction.
- Make your notes: Unless you are reading a written speech/paper, your notes should consist of key words and phrases, just enough to jog your memory and remind you of points you want to make. You can use cue cards, mind maps or ordinary notes on paper depending on your preference, but make them stand out.

Preparation

- Prepare any visual aids you want to use. These can be transparencies for an overhead projector (OHP), slides, flip chart or black/white board.
- Make sure any equipment you need is available and that you are familiar with its operation.
- Check your venue and familiarize yourself with it, if possible.

Practice

- Practice your presentation loud, either on your own or in front of friends who will give you helpful feedback.
- Use a tape recorder so you can listen to yourself. This will help you review how you may vary the tone of your voice, the points you might wish to emphasise and the amount of enthusiasm you communicate.
- You could practice in front of a mirror to identify any mannerisms or gestures you might want to change.
- Practice smiling! When you smile, you convey the message that you are pleased to be speaking to your audience. This makes them feel more comfortable, which in turn affects how you relate to your audience.

Food for thought

Certain approaches to communication are universally applicable when it comes to effective communication. One such model is that of breaking the communication process into elements:

INPUT – ENCODE – CHANNEL – DECODE – OUTPUT

However, rather than viewing it as simply linear, it might be more realistic to envision it as a spiral where feedback loops are built in, in recognition of the fact that communication is a 2 – way process. This model helps us to see the key role of the recipient of our communication.

PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

Over-head Projectors (OHP):

It is important for you not to put everyone to sleep by a boring drab lecture. A slide show, pictures, graphs, charts etc., convey things in a much better way than a droning speech. A careful study of your notes should help you decide which aspects could benefit from visual illustration on the OHP. Look for items which:

- Cannot be quickly and clearly described in words.
Example: Location of drought areas. These could be explained by maps with drought areas in different colours.
- Compare statistics.
Example: population changes. These could be effectively explained by colour charts.
- Are hard to comprehend.
Example: Influx of people over a period of time. These could be explained by colour overlays for each time period.
- Tend to bore or reduce concentration.
Example: Complex definitions. These could be explained by writing them out and highlighting key phrases in bright and alternative colours.

Projector Position:

- Before placing your projector make sure you know where the power supply is, the room size, seating arrangements etc.
- Try to project towards a darker area of the room; a corner may be best, as you can then group your audience in a semi-circle around the screen.
- The best screen is one that can be slightly tilted, and is free from distortion. If there is no screen, use a plain wall.

Keep your transparencies simple and as clear and uncluttered as possible. Display only one idea or theme per transparency, using as few words as possible. Use colours to accentuate/differentiate or brighten. Try to keep all your transparencies in the same format – horizontal view format is best as this corresponds with most screen dimensions.

Readability is governed by size, style and layout. Text should not exceed eight lines. Spaces between lines should be similar to the height of the letters. To make part of your text stand out, underline it, use bolder lettering or colour.

Trick of the Trade

Avoid large areas of text, as your audience will be tempted to read ahead of you and so not listen to what you are saying. To prevent this, mask the whole of the transparency, except for the title, with tracing paper. Reveal the text line by line as you progress and so control your viewer's reading. You can impose delays in order to allow difficult subjects to be absorbed, or to allow for questions.

PowerPoint presentations:

PowerPoint slides are meant to be used within the context of a talk. Talks are by their very nature superficial. You can't pack a tremendous amount of dense information in them, because then they become deadly dull. Keeping this in mind, minimal amounts of text should be put on a PowerPoint slide. Supporting visuals – charts, diagrams, illustrations, photos and video- are the only things that should appear on a slide. Everything else should preferably be distributed in handouts.

PowerPoint also enables you to import an Excel spreadsheet and also scan a chart or table and bring it into PowerPoint as a JPEG image. An intelligently presented simple list of bullet points, particularly if it is used on a chart, can focus people's attention on the appropriate data element at the appropriate time. It can help people appreciate the relationship between different pieces of data, and also make each piece of data more meaningful.

In case you wish to put the slide show on the web, here are a few recommendations:

- Switch from outline/slideshow mode to narrative/discursive mode so students will get the material your slideshow is designed to summarise.
- Replace your large, slow-to-download file with one that is dramatically smaller, using a simple "Save-As" operation.
- Reduce font sizes so you can combine slides and reduce overall file size. Students seated at a computer monitor can read many more words per slide than an audience seated 20 or more feet from a screen
- Avoid overuse of clip art and animation effects. Not all of these will transfer well to the web, and they add download time. Use only the minimum required to convey the instructional message, and test these carefully.

You must keep in mind, that whatever may be your mode of presentation, the basic challenges remain the same:

- The objective must be clear
- Do not complicate matters; keep it simple, with a logical flow to it.
- Make your presentation as interesting as possible, using the various tools described above.
- Prepare well, and remain confident throughout.

You have designed the show, so you know best!

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE WRITING PROCESS

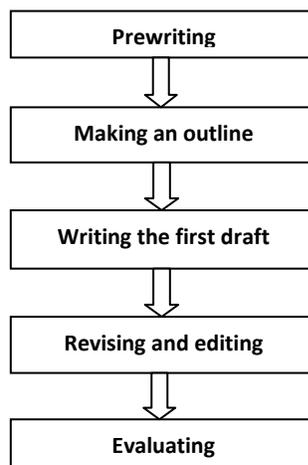
1. Sit in a straight, comfortable chair in a well-lit place with plenty of freshly sharpened pencils.
2. Read over the assignment carefully, to make sure you understand it.
3. Walk down to the nearest coffee shop with a friend and have some coffee to help you concentrate.
4. When you return to your room, return to a straight, comfortable chair in a clean, well-lit place with plenty of freshly sharpened pencils.
5. Read over the assignment again.
6. Check your e-mail; reply to everyone who has sent you letter.
7. Listen to your favourite CD and that is it; I mean it: as soon as this is over you are going to start that paper.

8. Phone your friend and ask if he has started writing yet. Discuss and exchange a few derogatory remarks about your teacher, the course, the university and the world at large.
9. Return to your chair and read over the assignment again; roll the words across your tongue; savour its special flavor. It is not past midnight and your paper is due in less than 12 hours.
10. Watch the latest episode of the saas-bahu fracas on television that you have taped on your DVD.
11. Read over the assignment one more time, just for the heck of it.
12. Scoot your chair across the room to the window and watch the sunrise.
13. Lie face down on the floor and moan. It is eight o' clock in the morning and your paper is due in another couple of hours.
14. Leap up and write the paper.
15. Type it and turn it in with minutes to space and get a C or a D on it.

If this is how you have been approaching writing assignments, then you need to do some serious work to master the writing process and go about the task in a logical and methodical manner.

The communication of complex ideas is a process that requires thinking and rethinking, writing and rewriting. Anyone who boasts of having completed an 'A' essay in the wee hours of the morning, or the night before the assignment was due, is either lying or is a whiz.

Every time you sit down to write, you embark on a "writing process"-the term for all the activities, mental and physical, that go into creating what eventually becomes a finished piece of work. The act of writing is a demanding and creative one; it is a tool that also empowers you because it allows you to participate in the ongoing dialogue with others in society. Even for experienced writers, the process of writing is usually a difficult one. Most writers follow a painstaking process of drafting and redrafting before they are satisfied with the final product. You could do the same by following the model given below:



Prewriting

Selecting a Topic:

When you begin the process of writing, you obviously have some subject in mind. For Example when asked to write a business report or a letter you know what the subject of your letter is going to be. Topics in business or technical writing are also clearly defined. The problem arises when you have been asked to write an essay or a report on a broad subject. For a brief essay/report, you need a topic much narrower, much more specific, so that you can provide relevant facts, examples, and other details that make writing significant and interesting.

Once you have narrowed the topic down and are all set to write, you could follow any one of the methods given below to start the thinking process.

Brainstorming:

Brainstorming is a way to let all your ideas flow; simply list all the ideas and thoughts that come to your mind without letting yourself judge whether they are good or coherent or make sense.

This is one of the best ways to accumulate interesting ideas on the topic given. You could also discuss the topic with friends, family and colleagues and note down everything that they have to say on the issue.

Suppose you are writing an essay on *Should capital punishment be abolished in India?* Your brainstorming notes could follow a pattern similar to this:

Why have capital punishment?

Which countries have capital punishment?

Is it barbaric for a civilized country to hang someone to death?

What could be the advantages of such punishment deterrent to crime, justice served, etc.

What about the disadvantages of such an act? Does it actually deter crime?

How to fix the problem – what is my stand on this issue?

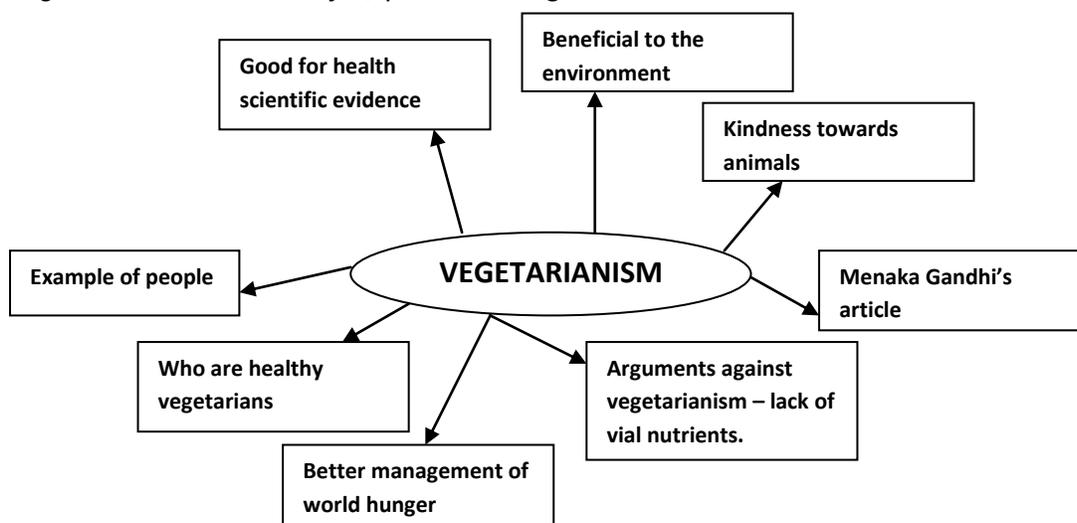
Look for statistics of crime vis a vis punishment and see it if is relevant to this topic.

What could be the alternatives? Life imprisonment?

Why should it be considered a more humane form of punishment? Do perpetrators of heinous crimes actually deserve more humane punishment?

Clustering:

It is also called mapping or webbing. Clustering is a visual process, and therefore enables you to think in a more structured manner about the topic. Clustering or mapping ideas is a lot like brainstorming, but instead of listing your ideas one after the other, you arrange them on your page so that you cluster related ideas together or connect them with a series of lines and circles. In the example below, each idea in the cluster can be developed into a paragraph about the topic. Suppose you are writing on *Vegetarianism* and its *benefits*, your clustering could look like this:



Free Writing:

Let yourself go and write as much as you can on the topic for fifteen minutes without thinking about its relevance, on your grammar for that matter. Once you reread what you have written, you will be surprised to realize that you have come up with ideas that you were not consciously aware of. Free association can be one of the most creative ways of overcoming writer's block.

Trick of the trade

Peter Elbow, a leading educator and researcher, pioneered the idea of free writing over twenty years ago. He advocates not letting the blank page scare you by beginning to write whatever comes to mind without stopping. If you can't think of anything to write, you repeat the last word you just wrote over and over again. Or you write, "I don't know what to write," over and over. Your subconscious mind becomes tired of writing the same thing, takes over, and opens your mind to new ideas and thoughts that were held captive in your brain.

Making an Outline

Once you have gathered material and have jotted down your ideas in a rough format, it is time to make an outline and give them some kind of shape. There are two basic and effective ways of making outlines.

Thesis Sentence Outline:

Let us first understand what is a thesis.

A thesis sentence is one that answers the questions "What is the main idea that I am trying to convey to my readers?"

Writing a thesis sentence requires you to stop and think about the subject on which you have chosen to write so as to determine the most interesting and effective way to approaching the topic. The thesis is the central idea in a piece of writing: the entire work develops and supports that idea. Though sometimes unstated, the thesis usually appears in a thesis sentence, or sentences, somewhere in the paper.

For example, if you were writing an essay on Drug Abuse – A serious teenage problem, your thesis sentence could be: "Substance abuse amongst teenagers has already reached alarming proportions, and if something is not done to help these kids, a disaster of unbelievable magnitude is just round the corner."

This sentence can then be used as a pointer for making a paragraph outline, which could resemble this:

Para 1: A brief introduction on the menace of drugs

Para 2: Facts and figures that support the claim that the menace has reached alarming proportions.

Para 3: One or two actual illustrations to show how drugs are destroying young lives.

Para 4: Reasons why teenagers are drawn to drugs

Para 5: What measures can be taken to curb the menace

Para 6: Summarising the main points

Topic Outlines:

This is an outline most suited for power –point presentations or presentations accompanied by overhead projectors. It also works well when you are trying to argue on both sides of an issue. A good topic outline will not only enhance your presentation skills but will also show the relationship between the several ideas that you wish to project in your presentation.

For example, if you were to write on *Should Capital Punishment be abolished in India?*, your topic outline could have the following points:

I. Capital punishment

A. Advantages

1. Serves as a major deterrent to crime
2. Satisfies the principle of eye for an eye
3. Teaches us to value life

B. Disadvantages

1. Perpetuates cruelty
2. The state loses moral authority

3. Does not really serve as a deterrent to crime

II. Life Imprisonment

A. Advantages

1. A chance to repent and make amends
2. More humane alternative
3. State's role as a giver of life

B. Disadvantages

1. The state likely to be seen as a soft target
2. Worse than capital punishment
3. Could lead to an increase in homicides

III. Conclusion

- A. Summarise both sides of the argument
- B. Arrive at a logically balanced conclusion which is not very opinionated

For the record, a thesis sentence for this topic would be: "While the principle of an eye for an eye holds great appeal, questions of social justice and basic human rights make us ponder whether it is morally right for the state to take away lives instead of awarding life imprisonment to criminals, a more ethical and perhaps equally effective alternative."

Writing the First Draft

An effective essay has a recognizable form – an arrangements of parts that guides readers, helping them see how ideas relate to each other and contribute to the whole. In most cases, an effective organisation emerges over one or more drafts. But many writers find that organizing ideas to some extent before drafting can provide a helpful sense of direction, as a map can help a driver negotiate a half-familiar system of roads. If you feel uncertain about the course your essay should follow, or if you have to write a complicated topic with many parts, creating a form to start with for your materials can clarify your opinion.

Most essays share a basic structure consisting of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion:

The **Introduction** – usually a paragraph or two- presents the topic, provides a background, if any, narrows the topic, and often includes a thesis sentence.

The **Body** - the longest part, contains the substance of the paper, developing parts of the thesis.

The **Conclusion**- usually a paragraph – ties together the parts of the body, sometimes restating the thesis, summarizing the major points, suggesting implications of the thesis, or calling for action.

The body of your paper will consist of paragraphs that develop the major points contributing to the thesis. A point may require a single paragraph or two to three paragraphs. Generally, body paragraphs have their own structures:

A topic sentence (often the first or second sentence) states the point that the paragraph develops. The other sentences offer examples, facts, experts opinions, and other evidence to support the topic sentence. Occasionally, a concluding sentence ties the evidence together or prepares for the point of the next paragraph.

Revising and Editing

Your job is by no means over once you have finished writing your essay. The most crucial part begins now – editing and revising. Look at what you've written with an open mind and ruthlessly edit all irrelevant or repetitive portions that destroy the unity of the essay. Grammatical errors, errors in punctuations, paragraph continuity, inappropriate sentence length – all these need to be looked into. Remember, you learn through your mistakes, but recurrence of the same mistake implies that you are not following a good writing strategy.

Given below are some of the most common mistakes that we make while writing. Use this checklist to edit and revise your writing:

- Punctuation errors
- Spelling errors
- Errors in the use of tenses
- Trite and hackneyed expressions
- Mixed construction
- Faulty sentence construction
- Unnecessary use of Passive Voice
- Lack of paragraph continuity
- Very lengthy sentences
- Ambiguity of meaning

The most common sentence errors include

- Fragmentary sentences
- Errors in the use of commas and semicolons
- Mixed constructions
- Dangling Modifiers

The purpose of revision and editing is to check for major as well as minor mistakes, to tighten as well as improve

Pitfall

An inexperienced writer often does little more than change a word here or there or corrects grammatical or mechanical errors and reprint/rewrite his paper to make it neater. This is not revision. Revision mistakes to larger elements such as overall structure and content.

the organisation, content and expression, and also to correct the mechanics of writing. You will save time and improve the quality of your writing by going over what you have written by systematically looking for specific flaws.

Evaluating

Once you have gone over the first draft of the essay, it is time to sit down and rewrite, so that your draft is error free. Once more evaluate your writing by asking the following questions:

Does the thesis sentence make an assertion about your topic?

Is the assertion limited to only one idea?

Is the assertion specific and significant?

Does the sentence convey your purpose?

Is the sentence unified so that the parts relate to each other?

Do the paragraphs have clear topic sentences?

If not, are the central ideas in the paragraph still clear? Are all the paragraphs connected to the central idea of the paper?

Should any details be deleted to make the connection to the central idea clearer?

Should other, more relevant details be added in their stead?

Now hand in your essay with the satisfaction that you have put in your very best. You should be confident that you could not have done a better job on this.