

Chapter 2

How Are Your Communication Skills?

Before moving forward, I would like to pose a challenge to you. Answer the questions below in full honesty, and then, assess your current state as a communicator in science. The questions apply to both expository practices and everyday communication in relationships with friends, colleagues, pupils, supervisees, supervisors, and so on. You might have some difficulty answering some questions, particularly the ones addressing experiences you have not yet undergone. In such cases, speculate on your possible behavior in the given situation.

	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. Do you usually expound your ideas in a timely manner, or do you always speak your mind without pondering on whether the context is appropriate?			
2. Do you probe your interlocutor (public, pupils, supervisors, among others) for his or her expectations before suggesting an idea or giving a speech?			
3. Do you start talks (chats, seminars, or lectures) by seeking to empathize with your interlocutor?			
4. Do you maintain a balance between speaking and listening (trying to talk less than you listen)?			
5. Are you concerned with confirming that your interlocutor understood your ideas properly?			
6. Do you prepare your presentations well ahead (or do you leave them to the last minute)?			
7. Do you usually plan your presentations (seminars, lectures, among others) thoroughly (or do you do the first thing that crosses your mind)?			
8. Do you usually think before speaking (or are you usually impulsive)?			
9. Do you indicate the presentation or communication aims before speaking?			
10. Do you carefully listen to opinions contrary to yours?			
11. Are you usually indulgent and polite when silly or unrelated questions are posed?			
12. Do you convey your ideas confidently and with thorough conviction?			
13. Do you try to stand in the listener's shoes when preparing a presentation?			
14. Do you always seek to add to the knowledge you have on the subject of the talk?			
15. Do you consult many references (personal or in the literature) when preparing a presentation?			
16. Do you argue without humiliating or attacking the other participant?			
17. Do you ponder long on your ideas before communicating them?			
18. Are you objective while speaking, and do you avoid irrelevant details?			

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19. Do you usually treat people as your peers and respectfully?
 20. When speaking, do you present as many new things as possible and avoid talking about what everybody already knows?
 21. Do you organize your presentations by dividing them into main sections, i.e., introduction, body, and conclusion?
 22. Do you try to imagine possible flaws and objections before making a presentation?
 23. Do you always answer questions sincerely, eventually saying “I don’t know” when applicable?
 24. Upon preparing a presentation, do you try to match it to the target audience, i.e., do you adapt the vocabulary and content to your interlocutors?
 25. Do you hold strictly to the intended subject, i.e., “talk about Brazil without travelling around the world”?
 26. Do people who want to know your opinion on some subject constantly approach you?
 27. Is it easy for you to express your ideas?
 28. Are you normally understood by people (or do they ask you to repeat what you have said)?
 29. Do you accept people who think differently than you?
 30. Do you always look for people to cooperate and support one another?
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Calculate your answer scores as follows:

Yes—3 points

Sometimes—2 points

No—1 point

Add the scores together, and check the corresponding interpretation below:

30–49: You need to address this matter as soon as possible!

50–70: Fair. You must pay more attention to this subject

71–90: You are a good communicator. However, remember that you can always improve

Use this challenge to reflect on your attitude as a communicator. It might surprise you, but sometimes our problems with speaking in public are due not to technical-scientific flaws in the preparation of a presentation but to psychological and emotional factors. Quite often, our worldview and attitudes toward people are perceptible to the public. At the end of a lecture, e.g., you might have thought, “Gee, the subject was interesting, but the speaker was too arrogant.” You might not be even aware of it, but sometimes your perception of a speaker as “arrogant” might affect your understanding of the lecture itself, i.e., build a “psychological” barrier against the discourse that was coming to you. For that reason, do not be hasty, but stop to ponder long, particularly on the questions you answered with a resounding “No”!



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