



WHAT IS VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION?

Published: March 29, 2023

Updated: June 23, 2026

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the story? Communication relies more on than just the words we speak. It's helpful to look at it as a two-part system. Verbal communication involves the words we use or text messaging, while non-verbal communication involves physical cues, gestures, and body language that provide context to those words.

For people with hearing loss, developing both ways of communication is important as it supports understanding and helps maintain confidence in everyday conversations.

What is an example of verbal and non-verbal communication?

Verbal communication involves spoken or written words and is the most direct way we share specific thoughts, instructions, and stories with one another. Spoken verbal communication is often accompanied by non-

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vocal elements, often called paralanguage, such as tone of voice, pace, and fluency. For example, speaking quickly may signal excitement, while a quiet, slower cadence may convey tiredness.

Non-verbal communication

plays a big role in how we connect with others and is a part of almost every social interaction. It includes all the ways we express ourselves, such as through body language, gestures, or facial expressions. An example may be using hand gestures for emphasis or smiling to show agreement. If verbal communication provides the script of our interactions, non-verbal communication provides context and emotional depth.

Why does verbal and non-verbal communication matter?

In daily life, these forms of communication constantly interact to reinforce,

substitute, or clarify one another. Consider how it would look in everyday scenarios:

- **Verbal communication**
example: Saying “Congratulations on the new job!” to a friend or colleague.
- **Non-verbal communication example:**
Giving your friend a thumbs up in approval across a noisy room.
- **Combined communication example:**
Saying “I’m so glad you’re here” to someone while giving them a warm smile.

When these cues contradict one another, such as someone saying "I'm fine" while frowning, the listener often places greater weight on the non-verbal cues over the spoken words. For individuals navigating hearing loss, reading these physical cues becomes an essential tool for filling in missing auditory details.

How does hearing loss affect communication?

Hearing loss can make verbal communication challenging, particularly when trying to hear and understand speech in noisy places. People may also miss vocal elements like tone or inflection. This often leads individuals to rely more on non-verbal communication to interpret messages.

People with hearing loss can benefit from improving or developing their understanding of non-verbal communication, such as [speechreading](#) and interpreting body language. These skills can help fill in the conversational gaps when you miss or struggle to understand speech.



How can I improve my non-verbal communication skills?

Improving your non-verbal communication skills involves intentionally using your body language, positioning, and visual awareness to make everyday interactions clearer. Like any skill, communication improves with practice.

- **Maintain eye contact:**
Looking directly at the speaker shows that you're actively engaged and helps you observe their facial expressions and other visual cues that support communication.
- **Face the speaker:** Position yourself face-to-face to support speechreading (lip-reading) and an unobstructed view of physical cues.
- **Pay attention to gestures:**
Watching for hand movements or nodding can help reinforce the spoken words you're trying to catch, especially

in noisy environments.

- **Observe posture and vocal tone:** A speaker's posture (leaning in versus pulling away) and the pitch of their voice can offer context.
- **Ask clarifying questions:** To keep your conversations on track, use [clarification as a listening technique](#) if someone's non-verbal behavior is unclear or contradicts their spoken words.

How can hearing aids support better communication?

Keeping up with conversations shouldn't feel like hard work. That's why Lexie over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids help make speech clearer, letting you focus on the people and the non-verbal cues right in front of you. Whether you are catching up in a busy restaurant or relaxing at home, you can easily tweak your

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Written by Lauren van der Vyver

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March 9, 2021

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