*The* MANAGER'S
*Communication*
TOOLKIT

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# Communication Checklists

## Email Dos

✓ Limit to one subject per email and list it clearly in the subject line.

✓ Give the most important information in the first sentence. Get to the point right away.

✓ Specify who should respond to your email.

✓ Be clear on when you need a response. The due date can also be included in the subject.

✓ Provide a summary when you are forwarding a chain of emails.

✓ Use the cc: field only when necessary.

✓ Be polite. Terseness can be misinterpreted.

✓ Review all the to: and cc: lines before sending. This ensures the email gets to the correct people, and only to them.

✓ Always reread and then spell-check your emails before sending.

✓ Use normal capitalization and punctuation. Some people view emails with all lower case, misspellings, and texting shortcuts as unprofessional.

✓ Be sparing with large attachments. Many servers have email size limitations.

✓ As organization-recorded documents, all emails are organizational property. They can be used as legal documents. Treat them as though they are being sent to the local newspaper. Avoid putting anything in an email that you wouldn't want to see on the front page or in court.

## Email Don'ts

✗ Don't escalate a conflict. Avoid email flaming (hostile and insulting emails); instead, request a face-to-face meeting or pick up the phone.

✗ Don't make assumptions if the email doesn't make any sense or something is unclear. Ask for explanation.

✗ Don't address more people in your email than necessary (don't overuse the "cc" field).

✗ Don't send or forward emails containing defamatory, offensive, racist, or obscene remarks.

# Email Don'ts

✖ Don't overuse "Reply to All." Use only when absolutely necessary, and never use for disparaging information.

✖ Don't use all capitals in emails; this usually comes across as shouting. If you are angry, take some time to think about the situation and then talk to the person face-to-face.

✖ Never send an email with disparaging information about any person; chances are it will get back to them (and see last item on list of "dos," above).

# Texting Dos

✓ Be polite. Terseness can be misinterpreted.

✓ Use texting for short communications and quick answers.

✓ Use normal capitalization and punctuation. Texting with all lower case, misspellings, and texting shortcuts can be interpreted as unprofessional.

✓ Treat all workplace text messages as though they are being sent to your boss or the local newspaper. Make sure you would feel comfortable with all your text messages being publicized.

# Texting Don'ts

✖ Don't text during meetings or while talking to someone.

✖ Don't use texting for confrontation.

✖ Don't overuse text acronyms, shortcuts, or emoticons. Not everyone in the workplace is familiar with texting shortcuts.

✖ Don't send text messages containing defamatory, offensive, racist, or obscene remarks.

✖ Don't hide behind texting; it is not a suitable substitute for face-to-face conversations.

✖ Don't use all capitals on texting; this is assumed to be shouting. If you are angry, talk to the person face-to-face.

## Face-to-Face Conversation Dos

✓ If you have not met before, introduce yourself and ask the other person's name.

✓ Use the person's name to show you are really paying attention and connecting.

✓ Leave conversations on a high note; people remember best what is said last.

✓ Articulate the purpose of the meeting. Prepare for your conversation.

✓ Be polite and respectful. Say "please" and "thank you."

✓ Be mindful of people's time and keep the conversation brief.

## Face-to-Face Conversations Don'ts

✗ Don't interrupt when someone else is talking.

✗ Don't fidget, look around, or get up from your chair when another person is talking to you.

✗ Don't make disparaging remarks about others, whether they are present or absent.

✗ Pick your battles. Don't argue about things that are not important.

✗ Don't use accusatory statements; they will put the other person immediately on the defensive.

✗ Don't change the focus of the conversation until you are sure all parties are ready to move on to a different topic.

## Phone Conversation Dos

✓ Introduce yourself immediately so the caller doesn't have to guess who is on the line.

✓ Leave conversations on a high note. People remember best what is said last.

✓ Have a purpose to your phone conversation. Prepare for your call and articulate the purpose of your telephone call early in the conversation.

✓ Be polite and respectful. Say "please" and "thank you." Your listener cannot see your body language, so you must overcompensate by being very polite.

✓ Listen to what the other person is saying.

# Phone Conversation Dos

✓ Be very clear in what you say; don't assume the listener knows what you want.

✓ Keep conversations short.

✓ If the phone conversation is not planned and may be lengthy, ask if this is a good time to talk; your listener will appreciate your respect for his time.

✓ Be direct and get to the point. Be very mindful of the person's time.

# Phone Conversations Don'ts

✘ Don't interrupt when someone else is talking.

✘ Don't use swear words. It is not only offensive to some people; it will make you appear less professional.

✘ Don't use accusatory statements. It will put the other person immediately on the defensive.

✘ Don't send emails or text messages while on the phone. You will not only miss what the person is saying, but they may hear the keystrokes and realize you are not paying attention to the conversation.

# Meeting Dos

✓ Have a timed agenda and a clear purpose for the meeting.

✓ Start and end the meeting on time.

✓ Respect the people at the meeting by being polite; honor their need to participate in the conversations.

✓ Articulate the purpose and the desired outcome of the meeting.

✓ Close the meeting formally, thanking attendees for their time.

✓ Document all decisions and actions taken in the meeting.

✓ Turn your cell phone off (or explain at the beginning you are waiting for a call and may need to step out).

✓ Come prepared to the meeting and ask only relevant questions.

# Meeting Dos

✓ Use active listening skills.

✓ Perform introductions if there are people in the meeting who may not know each other.

✓ Encourage the perspective of the entire group. Don't let the loudest or most talkative person run the show or determine the outcome.

# Meeting Don'ts

✗ Don't interrupt when someone else is talking. Be polite and pay attention to each speaker.

✗ In a face-to-face meeting, don't fidget, look around, or get up from your chair when another person is talking to you.

✗ In a teleconference meeting, say your name before you speak. Don't assume everyone recognizes your voice.

✗ Don't make disparaging remarks about others, whether they are present or absent.

✗ Don't answer your cell phone or read email during a meeting.

✗ Pick your battles. Arguments about things that are not important will veer the meeting off track.

✗ Don't invite people who do not need to attend for the meeting to accomplish its purpose. It is inconsiderate of their time.

✗ Don't carry on side conversations during the meeting; this is rude and disrespectful to the speaker.

✗ Don't allow the discussion to wander off topic; stick to the agenda.

✗ Don't allow negativity. Meetings should address business challenges in a solution-oriented manner.

✗ If you are leading the meeting and there is not a designated secretary, have someone take notes. This frees you up to lead the meeting and provides documentation of decisions and responsibilities.

## Written Reports Dos

✓  Use correct grammar, full sentences, and proper syntax.

✓  Have the report content verified and the text proofread.

✓  Reports are typically formal documentation; they need to be accurate.

✓  Develop your report to meet the needs of the target audience.

## Written Reports Don'ts

✗  Don't send in a report that has not been proofread by someone other than the writer.

✗  Don't trivialize reports; they are typically formal documentation and will probably be archived as permanent records.

✗  When using acronyms, don't assume everyone reading the document knows what they mean. Always write out the entire name on first occurrence, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Thereafter, use the acronym.

✗  Don't add more than what is necessary to the report. Include detailed backup information in an appendix, not in the main report.

## Communication Tools: Benefits and Disadvantages

| Communication Tool | Benefits | Disadvantages |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Face-to-Face** | Can see the body language, gestures, paralinguistic cues (voice, loudness, inflection, and pitch), facial expressions, and appearance. This provides feedback on how your communication is received, allowing you to adjust as needed. | It takes much more time to meet with people face-to-face. |
| **Telephone** | Easier to contact people by phone than face-to-face. With cell phones, people are typically reachable at all times of day or night. Can hear voice tones and inflection and receive feedback from the person during the communication. | Cannot see body language, gestures, or facial expressions; miss much of how people are reacting to the message. |

# Communication Tools: Benefits and Disadvantages

| Communication Tool | Benefits | Disadvantages |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Emails** | Easy to quickly send information to any number of people. Good for information sharing. Can be used to document decisions, policies, and actions. | No nonverbal cues, voice inflections, or tones. Very poor technique for building collaboration or carrying out confrontation. |
| **Texting** | Very quick and immediate response. Good for yes or no answers. | No nonverbal cues, voice inflections, or tones. Poor for detailed information sharing, collaboration, or confrontation. |
| **Group Meetings** | Excellent for team discussions, sharing status, or brainstorming sessions. | Should not be used for confrontation. If meetings are not run effectively, can be a time waste for the attendees. |
| **Presentations** | Typically, more formal than simple meetings. Very good for providing detailed information (such as design reviews, training). An excellent venue to provide well-thought-out communication. | Typically, longer preparation time. Should not be used for confrontation of an individual. They can waste time if not relevant to the audience. |
| **Reports** | Data sharing in a prescribed template. Excellent for information and status sharing. | Reports can become obsolete if their effectiveness is not constantly evaluated and adjustments are not made. |