

## Common Mistakes in Speaking with People Older Than You

Learning to communicate with older adults may not be at the top of your priority list, but if you're looking to build a successful career, you must be able to speak effectively with coworkers and bosses who are one, two, or three decades older.

Research shows that communication styles are different among Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Boomers. Since you may be speaking with all of these, you should learn rules of thumb to help form good relationships with people older than you.

**Avoid expecting the other person to be a mind reader.** You may know what you mean by a comment, but if your point is not clear, the other person will become distracted and stop paying attention. Explain yourself simply. Leave out unnecessary information.

*Ray Jennings says that he'd like to meet Tuesday at 2 p.m. to discuss a new project. Are you available?*



**Stop struggling to assert yourself.** You create barriers when you try to prove how smart you are. Avoid playing one-upmanship, make your communication engaging. After all, you were hired because you were considered capable.

*"Thanks for your advice on how I can make this work go faster. I'm going to try your ideas."*

**Craft your message and behavior to be positive and constructive.** You will be a successful communicator when you are viewed as positive, not self-defensive, brooding, or angry. This doesn't mean you can never bring up a negative, but your negative should be presented in a helpful way. Focus on your message and behavior that will lead others to see you positively.

*"I made a mistake on the annual report, but I have corrected it and sent you a revised version. I want to make sure you see the new version."*

**Don't expect feedback on every action you take.** Some people provide information on a "need-to-know basis." You may not receive feedback on matters that interest you, but are not related to your tasks.

*"When you finish the report I requested, we'll discuss it."* (Spoken by a supervisor)

**Action:** As a communicator in a work situation, which of the above communication strategies will be easiest for you to accept and which will be hardest. How can you prepare to deal with those that don't seem natural?

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*Note to instructors:* Communication among the generations, focusing both on "younger" and "older" generations, continues to be a source of study among researchers. One point is clear: There is a significant difference in how the generations communicate! Your students need to be able to communicate effectively with all generations. Help them learn and practice their career communication skills by focusing on the 50 Communication lessons of *Job Ready Career Skills*. Lesson titles are shown below.

### Job Ready Career Skills Communication Lessons

#### Communicating at Work

- Improving Communication Skills
- Effective Oral Communication
- Effective Written Communication
- Effective Nonverbal Skills
- Effective Word Use
- Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Handling Anger
- Dealing with Difficult Coworkers
- Dealing with a Difficult Boss
- Dealing with Difficult Customers

#### Listening

- Reasons for Listening
- Benefits for Listening
- Barriers to Listening
- Listening Strategies
- Ways We Filter What We Hear
- Developing a Listening Attitude
- Show You Are Listening
- Asking Questions
- Obtaining Feedback
- Getting Others to Listen

#### Nonverbal Communication

- Communicating Nonverbally
- Positive Nonverbal Messages
- Harmful Nonverbal Behaviors
- Reading Body Language
- Reading Mixed Messages
- Matching Verbals and Nonverbals
- Improving Nonverbal Listening
- Giving Nonverbal Feedback
- Showing Confidence Nonverbally
- Showing Assertiveness