



Verbal and Nonverbal Cues¹

Cues are signals, such as a word, phrase, or gesture, which indicate a meaning or feeling. Think about a person waving their hand back and forth. What does it mean? Could they be saying hello? Or goodbye? What other cues would help you understand the meaning of the gesture?

Nonverbal communication includes the gestures, facial expressions, and nonverbal aspects of speech such as accent, tone of voice, and speed of speaking. Imagine that same person waving their hand, but they have a confused look on their face. What would you guess the meaning of the wave is now? You might correctly suspect that they need help. Nonverbal cues can help others understand the messages we communicate.

Video Debrief: How Miscommunication Happens and How to Avoid It

- Why is communication often more difficult with a large group than a single individual?
- How might a person's age influence the way they receive and interpret messages? How might this affect the way people communicate at work?
- Noise can be defined as any interference that disrupts or distorts communication. What are some examples of noise? What sources of noise do you struggle with most?

Choosing the Right Cues

- Your group will be assigned a scenario and must create two scenes to act out. For each scene, imagine that you are interacting with a different person (for example: a teacher in scene 1 and a classmate in scene 2).
- Each person in the group should contribute to the scene. Some may help write out a script, some may act, while others help direct. Think about what each person is doing in the scenario, including their verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Once your group has a plan for both scenes, you will act it out for another group who will watch. Then you will watch the other group's plays. Take notes on the different types of cues used in the other group's scenes.

Write down your group's scenario:

Commented [JB1]: I don't think it's clear here that you mean a person with a different level of formality. Maybe include the examples like in the facilitator guide.

Commented [KN2R1]: Will do

¹ This activity is based on Skills to pay the Bills: Verbal and Non-Verbal Cues originally created by Workforce Solutions.



Scene 1

Who are you interacting with?

What verbal or nonverbal cues will you use?

Scene 2

Who are you interacting with? (A different person than scene 1)

What verbal or nonverbal cues will you use? What will you change from scene 1?

Reflection Questions

Discuss the questions below with the class:

- Why do we change our verbal and nonverbal cues when interacting with different people?
- Do some cues seem more appropriate in some scenarios than others? Why?
- What happens if we use the wrong cues for the wrong audience?

