

# COMMUNICATION STYLE & INTERACTION



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## COMMUNICATION STYLE & INTERACTION

*“Why don’t people just listen better?”*

*“I had it written down and she never looked at it.”*

*“What difference does it make to her to know it works – it just works!”*

*“I told him twice and he still didn’t understand.”*

*“I didn’t have time to write it all down for him.”*

*“If people understood the process better they would know why it’s a problem.”*

Awareness of communication style allows us to respond more effectively to people because we are more attentive to their styles of communication. An essential part of communication is sending and receiving information. Unless we can send information to people in a style in which they understand readily, we may not complete the process at all.

If you ever made or heard any of the statements listed above you were experiencing the frustration that comes with not understanding styles of communication.

**AUDITORY:** People receive information best when they hear it – with their own ears and can repeat and hear it again for clarity.

**VISUAL:** People receive information best when they can see it and review it again by looking at it.

**KINESTHETIC:** People receive information best when they can feel it, be a part of it and/or experience it and understand how it works.

## **Consider some day-to-day activities and the way you process information in these settings.**

How do you manage the menu in restaurants? Do you discuss the menu with others and ask questions to help you make your choice? You may be *auditory* in your style. Do you read the menu carefully and select a meal based on what looks good in the menu? Do you read through the whole menu before you choose? In this case you may be *visual*. Or, do you order based on what you feel like eating or what you've eaten in this restaurant before. Or do you order something that smells good? You may be a *kinesthetic* processor of this kind of information.

How do you handle directions for assembling Ikea furniture or any product that requires assembly? Do you discuss the directions briefly before you start and ask questions about the directions to others working with you? This would be an *auditory* approach. Perhaps you spread the directions out on the floor and follow them step-by-step, reading carefully before taking action. You would be using a strong *visual* style in that case. Or, do you go ahead and put the thing together in a workable way and when you have four parts left over, ask where the directions are? You are probably *kinesthetic*.

In what way do you communicate for following directions on microwave popcorn? Do you yell out "How long do I zap this stuff?" That would be an *auditory* approach. Or, do you read the directions on the package carefully and follow them step-by-step? That would be a *visual* approach. Perhaps you put the package in the microwave oven, push a few buttons and watch to see what happens. You must be *kinesthetic*.

So what happens when you try to direct a person through the steps of a process or the requirements of a task? With an *auditory* person, you may give full instruction, and they will probably ask you to repeat or clarify the instructions. The *auditory* person may even talk out loud as they follow the steps. Typical statements from an *auditory* person would be:

***"Did I hear you right... the first step is to..."***

***"Could you say that again slowly?"***

***"Could you run that by me again?"***

***"Would you repeat that for me?"***

We need to understand that the **auditory** person processes information by hearing it. We have to be patient and not assume that it has anything to do with intelligence or capability. It is just a different way of processing than some others use.

The **visual** communicator will probably respond to your directions by taking the time to write them down. They may read back to you what they have written to clarify or confirm the message. Typical comments from a visual communicator would be:

***“Could you wait until I get a pen and paper?”***

***“Do you have these instructions written down somewhere? Could you fax or E-mail them to me?”***

***“Could you confirm that in writing for me?”***

***“I don’t see that in the information I have.”***

***“Tell me where it is in the manual.”***

**Kinesthetic** - people, are often more interested in how things fit together, or, in what makes things work. They want to do what needs to be done while they are receiving the instructions. Typical questions or comments from the *kinesthetic* person would be:

***“Okay, I’ve got it started...should it be making this noise?”***

***“What happens after I do that?”***

***“How does it work when you put it all together?”***

***“I’ll try it first, and call you when I need help.”***

## Act on the Cues – Adapt Your Style to Achieve the Best Results

When another individual gives you clues as to their preferred communication style, you must adapt your style to achieve the best results. If you are *visual*, and the other person is *visual*, you will probably have an easy time finding the best way to clarify your information. However, when your style differs from that of the other person, you will need to be aware and respond consciously in keeping with other's style. Always remember – the *auditory* must hear it, the *visual* must see it, and the *kinesthetic* must work with it feel it and/or experience it.



# COMMUNICATION STYLES INVENTORY

Are you an auditory, visual or kinesthetic communicator? Or, are you a little of all three? Maybe you are both auditory *and* visual or visual *and* kinesthetic or kinesthetic *and* auditory. Participate in this assessment to help you become more aware of your preferences and/or tendencies as a communicator.

This assessment tool is made up of three sections. In each part you will be asked to choose your preference from the three choices given. Section I contains sets of words. Section II contains phrases and Section III contains paragraphs. As you work through the test, choose either A, B, or C for each question. Choose quickly – go with your first impression. Choose the one you like, the one that catches your attention, the one that appeals to you - the one you feel a comfort or familiarity with. If you can't choose "on the spot" skip that question and come back to it when you finish the others. Remember, you are not reading for meaning or comprehension, just for appeal and response.

## SECTION I.

- |    |    |                            |    |                              |    |                                |
|----|----|----------------------------|----|------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 1. | A. | View<br>See<br>Look        | B. | Question<br>Hear<br>Listen   | C. | Touch<br>Feel<br>Sensitize     |
| 2. | A. | Feel<br>Stir<br>Hurry      | B. | Point<br>Watch<br>Witness    | C. | Discuss<br>Tell<br>Describe    |
| 3. | A. | Squeal<br>Yell<br>Proclaim | B. | Handle<br>Massage<br>Tactile | C. | Inspect<br>Observe<br>Exhibit  |
| 4. | A. | Eyed<br>Scene<br>Focus     | B. | Mention<br>Tone<br>Volume    | C. | Grip<br>Grasp<br>Support       |
| 5. | A. | Hearsay<br>Knock<br>Call   | B. | Hustle<br>Movement<br>Hot    | C. | Vista<br>Binoculars<br>Lookout |
| 6. | A. | Glitter<br>Glossy<br>Glow  | B. | Silence<br>Sound<br>Boom     | C. | Soft<br>Tender<br>Rushing      |

- |     |    |                                  |    |                               |    |                                  |
|-----|----|----------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| 7.  | A. | Record<br>Listened<br>Drumming   | B. | Concrete<br>Firm<br>Gentle    | C. | Appear<br>Illusion<br>Brightness |
| 8.  | A. | Lukewarm<br>Pull<br>Feeling      | B. | Colourful<br>Book<br>Bright   | C. | Audible<br>Horn<br>Blast         |
| 9.  | A. | Observe<br>Outlook<br>Shaded     | B. | Articulate<br>Hearing<br>Beat | C. | Reflex<br>Muscle<br>Rub          |
| 10. | A. | Purring<br>Growling<br>Overheard | B. | Relaxed<br>Tempo<br>Gasping   | C. | Vision<br>Observant<br>Showed    |

**SECTION II.**

- |     |    |                          |    |                                       |    |                              |
|-----|----|--------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 11. | A. | Let me see               | B. | Repeat it                             | C. | It works                     |
| 12. | A. | Lend me your<br>ear      | B. | Give me a hand                        | C. | Keep your eye<br>on it       |
| 13. | A. | Hand in hand             | B. | Eye to eye                            | C. | Word for word                |
| 14. | A. | Let's have a<br>look     | B. | Listen carefully                      | C. | Get on with it               |
| 15. | A. | Come to grips<br>with it | B. | Get the picture                       | C. | Hear the word                |
| 16. | A. | Listen up                | B. | Catch this                            | C. | Short sighted                |
| 17. | A. | I see what you<br>mean   | B. | I hear where<br>you're coming<br>from | C. | I get it now                 |
| 18. | A. | Underhanded              | B. | Bird's eye view                       | C. | Outspoken                    |
| 19. | A. | Clear as a bell          | B. | Smooth as silk                        | C. | As far as the<br>eye can see |

20. A. The roll of thunder                      B. A flash of lightning                      C. The thrill of the chase

**SECTION III.**

21. A. I can hear the rain falling on the roof and the tinkle of the wind chimes adds a melody to the tune.
- B. I can see the dark clouds in the west and the brightness of the rainbow colours the sky behind the clouds.
- C. As I run through the rain, I can feel the wetness in my hair. The breeze blows through my light sweater and I feel cool and fresh.
22. A. I like being warm. On a cold day, I like to relax by a warm fire with a hot cup of coffee to warm me inside.
- B. The woman talked excitedly on the phone. I could hear the conversation clearly and I could imagine what was being said on the other end.
- C. The view was incredible. The sun appeared to hang momentarily on the edge of the ocean and then disappeared from our sight.
23. A. They appeared surprised at the size of the audience. They looked down from the stage, each one trying to see the people they knew.
- B. I was helped to my feet and supported as I walked around the track. I could feel the strength returning to my legs. My muscles ached but I felt warm all over.
- C. The speaker has everyone's attention. She was dynamic and exciting and her voice rose and fell as she told us the story. Everyone was listening raptly.

24. A. People can express themselves fluently and effectively when they talk about what interests them. The talk show hosts always get people talking about things they like and the things they care about. We love to listen to them.
- B. I like to try to understand what makes people tick. It is interesting to try to figure out why people do the things they do.
- C. Children watch grown-ups and mirror their behaviors. By watching other people they take on gestures and actions like those they see. A little girl may walk like her mom or sit the way she sees her mom sit. She copies what she sees.
25. A. The artist has an eye for beauty. Artistic people see the colours, the brightness and the diversity of their surroundings.
- B. The beat of the music could be heard throughout the building. The change of tone and tempo caught everyone's attention. People were drawn to the music like children at a parade.
- C. Everyone was stirred by the deep emotion of the event. Many people in the audience had tears running down their cheeks. The entire audience cheered as the winners took the podium. They sang their national anthem with pride and joy.

# COMMUNICATIONS STYLE ASSESSMENT

## INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Transfer your responses from the assessment to this sheet by circling the letter that you chose for each of the numbered items.

<b>Part One:</b> <b>Words</b>	1.	B.	A.	C.
	2.	C.	B.	A.
	3.	A.	C.	B.
	4.	B.	A.	C.
	5.	A.	C.	B.
	6.	B.	A.	C.
	7.	A.	C.	B.
	8.	C.	B.	A.
	9.	B.	A.	C.
	10.	A.	C.	B.
<b>Part II</b> <b>Phrases</b>	11.	B.	A.	C.
	12.	A.	C.	B.
	13.	C.	B.	A.
	14.	B.	A.	C.
	15.	C.	B.	A.
	16.	A.	C.	B.
	17.	B.	A.	C.
	18.	C.	B.	A.
	19.	A.	C.	B.
	20.	B.	A.	C.
<b>Part III</b> <b>Mini</b> <b>Paragraphs</b>	21.	A.	B.	C.
	22.	B.	C.	A.
	23.	C.	A.	B.
	24.	A.	C.	B.
	25.	B.	A.	C.
<b>TOTALS</b>		I ____.	II ____.	III ____.

2. Now, total the letters circled in each vertical column. Place these three scores from column I, II and III in the box below.
3. Multiply each one by four for your style assessment measurement.

<b>Column I</b> _____	<b>x 4 =</b> _____.
<b>Column II</b> _____	<b>x 4 =</b> _____.
<b>Column III</b> _____	<b>x 4 =</b> _____.

	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
<b>Column I Auditory</b>										
<b>Column II Visual</b>										
<b>Column III Kinesthetic</b>										

**Your highest score indicates the primary style that you use to interpret and communicate with the world around you.** You probably use this preference (auditory, visual, or kinesthetic) the most, particularly when you are problem solving or in stressful situations.

**Your second highest (middle) score indicates your secondary style,** which you likely use in everyday conversation, in combination with your primary style.

**Your lowest style indicates your tertiary style,** which you may not use as much as the other two or at all in your normal conversation. In fact, it often remains at the unconscious level.

These three styles are often indicated by our words/phrases. A visual person is likely to say “*I see*” or “*that looks right*”. An auditory person is likely to say “*I hear you*” or “*that sounds right*”. A kinesthetic person is more likely to say “*I got it*” or “*that feels right*”. Your choices in this style assessment were related to your preferences in style of communication.

Each individual seems to be most comfortable in using one or two of these styles. Some people believe, however, that if an individual could learn to communicate in all three of the styles, he or she could establish more rapport and trust with people whose primary styles differ from his or her own. **Increased ability to communicate in all three styles thus might lead to increased effectiveness in communication.**

## Hints and Tips for communicating effectively with people who have differing styles of communications.

### AUDITORY PEOPLE:

1. Speak clearly and in plain language.
2. Invite questions and discussion.
3. Be willing to repeat information.
4. Provide verbal reminders.
5. Read instructions and direction aloud.
6. Be patient when asked to repeat or go over information.
7. Maintain a calm, even tone when repeating or reviewing information.
8. Encourage people to paraphrase or verbalize their understanding of the discussion.
9. Use the skill of paraphrasing to ensure common understanding.
10. Emphasize key points by changing your tone and/or voice level.
11. Try to discuss issues without other auditory distractions.
12. Ask people if they can hear what is being said.



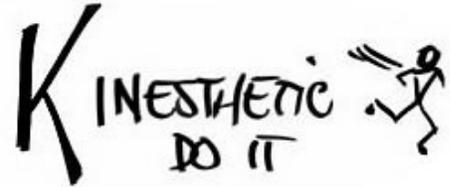
## **VISUAL PEOPLE**

1. Invite the people to write down directions or instructions.
2. Offer to fax, E-mail or mail written confirmation of the discussion.
3. Invite reading back of messages and/or directions.
4. Discuss ways for the other person to view or see the information.
5. In person-to-person discussion watch for the “squint” expression, which indicates the visual person doesn’t see the message.
6. Be willing to draw diagrams or sketches to support your information.
7. Use underlining, bold print or graphics to draw the attention of the visual person.
8. Colour appeals to the visual communicator.
9. Encourage the individual to view their written material as you go over it verbally.
10. Ask them to describe their view or perception to you.
11. Ask them if they can see what you’re saying.
12. In person, maintain eye contact with the other person.



## KINESTHETIC PEOPLE:

1. Encourage participation throughout the process or discussion.
2. If it is a “hands on” process or description, encourage them to work as they go.
3. Be prepared for the kinesthetic person to jump ahead or work faster than the steps or instruction outline.
4. Be willing to answer lots of questions about why and how things work.
5. Listen for questions regarding barriers or stoppages. These indicate inability to understand the process.
6. Accept challenges from them such as “why”, “why not”, “if I”, “it should.”
7. Invite questions about the “big picture.”
8. Describe information based on application and/or practical use.
9. Allow them to describe their approaches and/or methods.
10. Accept information on improved or enhanced application.
11. Allow people to process information at their own pace.
12. Give examples, stories, situations and experiences.



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