

# Communicating Effectively: Good Comms Guide

## Good communication helps you:

- Achieve your organisational or project objectives.
- Engage effectively with your audiences.
- Demonstrate the impact of your work.

How you speak to your audience and share your messages are vital to getting the **action you need from people**.

Understanding who you're talking to, what you need to say, and how you say it will help you to develop your communications.

Our basic guide applies to all types of communication from social media, community engagement or even internal comms.

## Getting started

Before you begin communicating, you need to be clear on the basics. Exploring these first will help you to craft inspiring messages tailored to your audience, reflecting your goals and driving engagement. The following steps are key considerations for **every piece of communication you do**:

- **Purpose – why are you creating this communication?**

Think about **what you want your audience to know, understand, think, do or feel**.

Don't share something purely for the sake of it, think about what the message adds and how enriching it is.

- **Audience – who are you talking to?**

Think carefully about who you're addressing and how knowledgeable they might be about the topic. **One size doesn't fit all**. If you need to reach different groups of people, you'll need to adapt your communications for each audience.

- **Call to action (CTA)**

All communications should have a clear call to action, or in other words, **what you want your audience to do after seeing your message**. This should be one simple message.

Do you want them to fill in a form? Sign up for an event? Contact for more information?

Be aware of a change in policy? **Tell them**. If you don't, they won't magically know!

- **Your impact**

Think about **how your work has helped others**. Don't just explain what you did but think about what happened because of this. This will make your messages a lot more engaging and personal, which is something people relate to.

- **Do you have relevant quotes or case studies?**

Personal accounts bring a story to life. Try and get some first-person accounts that link to the work you're describing. **Words of the people we work with, support and are trying to inspire are more powerful than ours**. But make sure you get permission from the person, or change the name and remove identifiable information.

- **Key messages**

Research shows that the quicker we process and recall information, the more we believe it. Making **one point at a time and having simple, clear messages helps us build credibility and trust**. Creating a bank of core, overarching messages will also help you maintain consistency about your organisation's mission(s) and set yourself up as a trusted source in these areas.

## Drafting a message

Once you've considered all the points above, it's time to create what you want to say. It's a good idea to:

- **Avoid long, windy sentences.** As a rule of thumb, try to **keep each sentence under 30 words**. Avoid jargon and acronyms and always **explain things in the simplest way**, with the easiest-to-understand words. You don't want to alienate your audience or put them off if something seems too complex.
- Time your message. How long does it take to read or say? If it's longer than 15 seconds, consider if there's something that can be taken out. **Long messages are harder for people to remember**. Obviously, some communications (articles, blogs etc.) may be longer to read, but try to break down each point as simply as possible, focussing on one thing at a time. **You should also use headings and bullet points to make things easier to digest.**
- Test your message. Ask someone not involved to give you **feedback on how interesting, clear and engaging it is**.
- **Use helpful, free online apps** like Grammarly and the Hemmingway app to check for grammar and language. These apps will also suggest edits to make your writing clearer.

# Good comms checklist

Here's a **quick checklist** for creating and editing your communications.

- Use plain English.
- Keep sentences under 30 words.
- Use subheadings, numbered lists, and bullet points to break text up.
- Use storytelling.
- Make it quick and easy for people to understand, and don't assume knowledge.
- Only tell people what they need to know and get to the point quickly. Which points are most important to the audience? Tell these early on.
- Start with why you do what you do, the benefits.
- Make one point at a time, and make each point well.
- Provide evidence to illustrate the impact of your work - statistics, facts from research, examples, quotes and case studies.
- Use active language. Make sure the subject of the sentence is doing something, rather than having something done to it. For example, use **“We supported the energy company to prioritise their net zero targets”** rather than “The net zero targets were supported by our partnership with the energy company.”
- Show, rather than tell.



St James Court  
St James Parade  
Bristol BS1 3LH

0117 934 1400  
[www.cse.org.uk](http://www.cse.org.uk)  
@HelloCSE

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Company 02219673

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