


# SIX STEPS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



## Plan what you want to say before you commit your thoughts to paper.

Sounds like a no-brainer. Yet, how many times have you read something and thought, “What are *they* saying?” Chances are “*they*” didn’t stop and figure out what it was they wanted to say before attempting to put it into words.

### To figure out what you want to say, ask yourself two questions:

- “What do I want the audience to know?”
- “What do I want them to do with the information?”



## Know your audience.

Target your message to your audience. Is it going to parents, to students, to coworkers, or to all three? Can you use the same message for all three groups? Probably not. Do you have to tailor the message for each group? Most likely. Different audiences require different messages. The good news is that you can use a variation on your original theme.

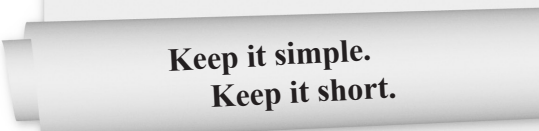


## Know what your audience wants and write to that.

Don’t tell them what you want. They don’t care.

*For example:*

You want parents to come to an open house. Honestly, they don’t want to come, and deep down inside you know they don’t want to come. So, don’t tell them to come to your open house. Tell them where they can learn how to get reduced college tuition for their children, where they can get cool gifts, and when free stuff will be handed out. Oh...it’s at the open house... imagine that, win-win.



## Keep it simple. Keep it short.

The average American is exposed to 3,000 messages each day (paid advertising, e-mails, letters, phone calls and general conversations). So keep your messages short and simple.

- Don’t get weighed down in educational jargon, acronyms or overly detailed explanations.
- Don’t use lengthy sentences when short, pithy ones will do.
- Don’t use qualifiers like: *in most instances, perhaps, it is likely, in general.*

**Get straight to the point.** Got it?



## Write | Edit | Rewrite

Once and done doesn’t work for even the best of writers. Write it. Read it. C’mon, you can do better than that. Rewrite it. Reread it.

### Now let others read your work.

Before you send a document off to an unsuspecting public, give it to others to read, preferably to those who are unfamiliar with the subject matter. The human brain automatically fills in gaps in information if it has the data available to do so. Someone who is less clued in will be much more helpful in determining whether or not your message is clear.



## Proofread

Always proofread your work. After you have proofread your work, proofread it again. Then give it to someone else to proofread. Always have at least one other person proof your work as you will tend to read what you think you wrote, whether or not that is what actually appears on the printed page (there goes that brain filling in the gaps again). After you have made the necessary corrections, proofread again.

### Read the document aloud.

You catch more mistakes reading aloud as you are forced to say each syllable and will not inadvertently revert to skimming a page and filling in the gaps.

