

## LESSON 2 WHAT TO LEARN

### LEARN MORE >>>

#### Suggested Tasks

Take 5 or 10 minutes to think back and reflect on new things (large or small) that you have learned in the past 24 - 48 hours. You may be surprised as to how long your list is!



*“The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think—rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men.”*

JOHN DEWEY

Everyone learns. Some things we learn are good for us. Some things we learn may be of little consequence and other things may be bad for us.

You learn both formally and informally, every day of your life; whenever you play a game, read a book, watch TV, use a computer, visit a new place or talk with someone. Regardless of age, you will have learned many things over the last 24 hours. Some of these things may be trivial and insignificant and others could be valuable later in life.

*“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.”*

CONFUCIUS

Often there can be multiple dimensions to something you learn, for example:

1. When confronted with a disassembled toy or piece of furniture that you purchased, you need to learn how to assemble it. You may try to assemble it without following instructions and discover difficulty. You will then start following the instructions. In going through this process you might be learning not only how to assemble this item but also reinforcing an awareness that it can be more efficient to follow instructions than to try and do something without following instructions.
2. When learning to drive, you may observe someone else driving and think that you can do it, but when you are actually put in the car and have to learn how to control the brake, the clutch, and the steering wheel and so on, it is not always so easy. So you may realise that you need instruction from someone, someone telling you what to do, then you practice, receive constructive criticism, try again, until finally you are able to drive well.

3. Think of something simple like making a sandwich. You may observe someone else make a tuna and mayonnaise sandwich. You give it a try. You put too much mayo in, or put too much filling in and it escapes from the sandwich. You try again and finally learn to make the sandwich in the way that suits you. So you are learning by trial and error.
4. A teacher shows you diagrams of how to wire an electricity circuit. The teacher then shows you what to do. You then try wiring it. The teacher comments on how you do this until you learn how to do it well. So you listen to the academic knowledge, you observe, you try and then you learn to perform.

So when we learn, we may learn through academic learning and listening, observations, trying and retrying tasks.

## Knowing What to Avoid

As we already know, young children learn through conditioning and modelling from their parents. Even before they are even aware of their environment, the people and common influences around them, neonates will distinguish between having a need and it being responded to. From there they will learn cravings and aversions i.e. seeking food (through the hunger sensation) or avoiding a wet nappy (through sensations of discomfort).

The influences and stimulations of the environment in which children are raised and the responses from parents and

## LEARN MORE >>>

### Suggested Tasks

Try a new task - really stop and think about how you approach this task and the steps you take to complete it.

Try it 3 or 4 times and see how the steps you take change, how your learning changes and whether or not you improved with experience.

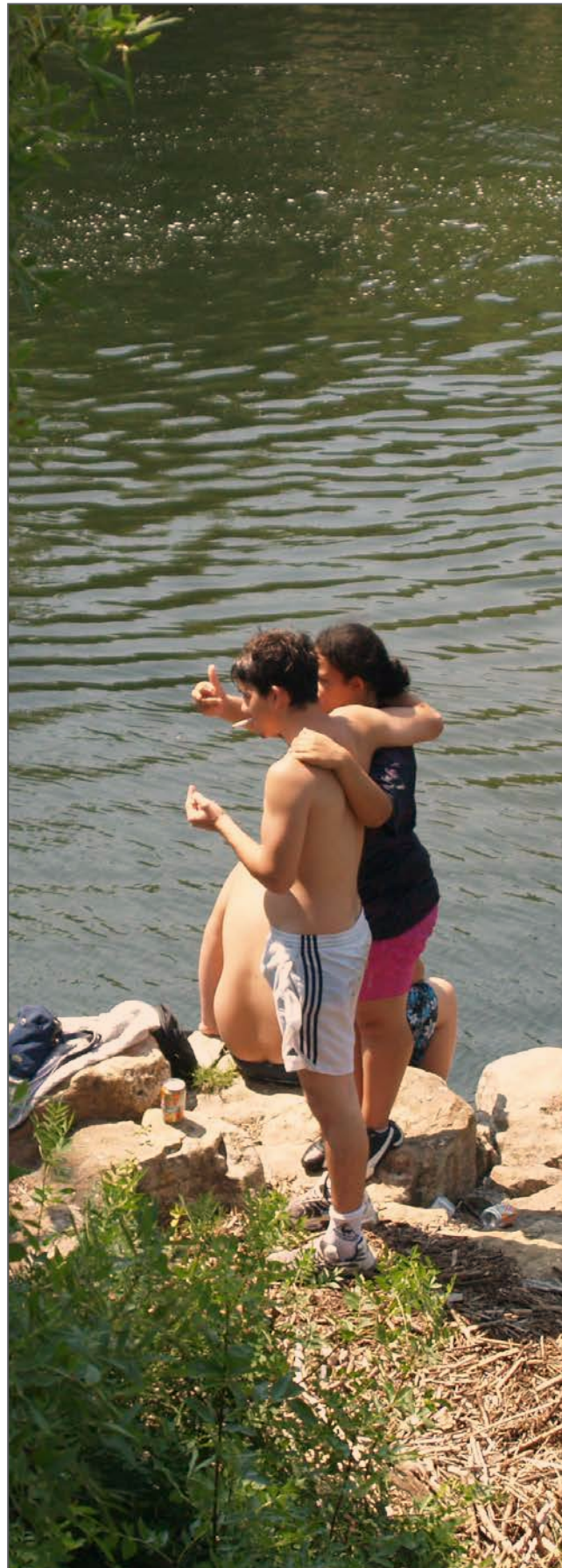
others in the home can teach children positive and negative behaviours, feelings and reactions. Parents and carers may consciously decide to minimise or prevent children's exposure to certain influences or environments. Examples of these include films containing adult themes, violent sports (e.g. Thai boxing), and places deemed unsuitable for young people such as pubs or casinos.

Naturally, we hope to teach children to be joyful, courteous, kind and effective communicators, but children can and do learn things which could be considered negative by cultural standards. Examples of negative behaviour may include having a violent or aggressive nature, demonstrating prejudice(s), developing addictions or swearing and using abusive language.

Please be aware these suggestions of negative behaviour are not conclusive, also not all of these examples are always considered negative by parents and families in all cultures. It has to be understood that some families values are different to others and some will not perceive the same behaviours as negative, or with long-term detrimental consequences.

Undesirable behaviours may sometimes be learned in a formal teaching environment e.g. extremist view of teachers or instructors, but more commonly, as we have outlined, behaviours are learned informally from friends and acquaintances. To avoid learning such negative behaviours, there

needs to be a moral viewpoint from which ideas are developed and then avoidance of such situations.



## LEARN MORE >>>

### Suggested Tasks

Make a list of the most important behaviours you think you have learned through each of the following:

- Family
- School
- Friends

List them under each heading - they may not be negative - many will be positive. Now highlight the negatives and think of the ways you have or can avoid these.

## Be Aware of What You Learn

Because learning occurs through many different means, it is important to be aware of what you are learning. For children this is important as they are impressionable. They may learn things from friends, internet, television or other influences that may not be desirable. For example they may model their behaviour off someone who is demonstrating undesirable behaviour, such as swearing or being aggressive. Children may also pick things up from friends. Children may not completely understand things that they are exposed to, so may come to an incorrect understanding of something. For example, they may see on television a news item about a police officer who has shot someone. They may come to an understanding that police officers are “baddies”, without understanding the full situation.

When it comes to learning, you must be careful to check the credibility of the source of your learning – don’t just believe everything you hear or read! For example on the internet anyone can create a website or blog and post information online. People come along and read the information, believing it to be true, and may use that knowledge. If the knowledge is not correct in the first place, then the knowledge you have gained is not effective and useful.

A simple example, John Smith sets up a website about famous historical dates and puts on there that the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1966 instead of 1066.

So when gaining knowledge from the internet, it is important to ensure that the website is reliable and valid and that the information is correct. You can often check this by looking at another website or textbook.

When learning you must be discerning as to the quality and accuracy of what you are learning.

## Valuable Attributes to Learn

The following are universally valuable and most enlightened educators would agree these are fundamental skills that everyone should try to learn, but many fail to learn:

**Verbal Communication** - Good communication involves two parts; one involves messages being created and directed to the listener(s). This involves the intended person receiving (hearing) what is said. For the communication to be effective there must be clarity in what is said, and understanding in how it is received and interpreted. Some people are very good at creating and delivering messages, but poor at receiving them. A good communicator must be both a skilled speaker and a skilled listener.

**Body Language** - ability to read what a person is saying by observation - reading their actions, gestures, movement and stance as a guide to what they are feeling about a subject on which they are communicating.

**Written Communication** - Written communication is similar to verbal

## LEARN MORE >>>

### Suggested Tasks

Watch the ACS video on 'Body Language'

You can find the video on the ACS Distance Education Vimeo Channel at

<https://vimeo.com/335034694>

except that the delivery and response may not be as immediate; and as such, it is possible for the communicator to take more time to refine what they are trying to communicate. We also tend to write in a different way to the way we speak. If you read textbooks or formal educational books, then the writing tends to have quite a formal style. If you read dialogue or more modern books, they may write in the way that we tend to speak, so there is variation in how we communicate in written form.

## Communication

Communication is essential for humans to express our feelings, interpret information, inform others, and to avoid confusion that can lead to future problems. It also allows us to keep order and to control otherwise potentially disastrous or dangerous situations.

### What is Communication?

Communication is about passing messages from one to another. Messages can take place via a medium, such as a phone or email.

- **One way communication** is when the receiver cannot respond.
- **Two way communications** is when the receiver can respond to the message.

There are a number of different forms of communication that should be considered.

Consider the following two definitions of communication:

“The process by which information is passed between individuals or organisations, by means of previously agreed symbols.”

*Communications in Business by Peter Little (Longman 1974)*

“Communication is the process of detecting, assigning and organizing meanings and values. It frequently involves an attempt to transfer such meanings and values to other people in ways which will develop response and affect behaviour. It is thus, very often, a relating and interacting process.”

*Handbook of Communication Skills by Tolmie and Tolmie (PrenticeHall)*

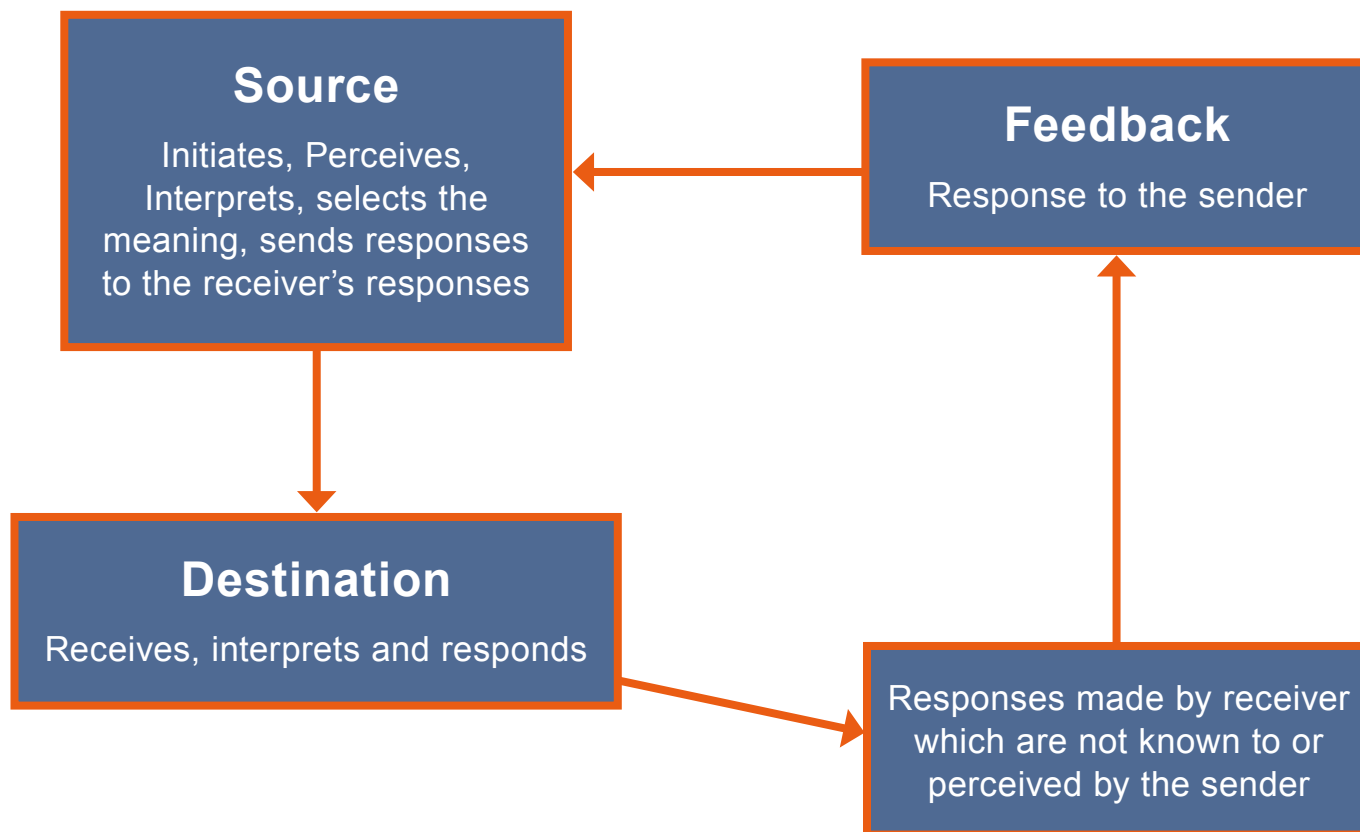
There are some basic things we can say about communication:

- It never occurs in a vacuum.
- There needs to be both someone who gives the message and someone who receives the message.
- The giver and the receiver deal with personal perceptions.
- They may perceive or interpret the same thing (this is effective communication) or they may perceive or interpret the message to be other than what was intended (this is ineffective communication).
- Items of communication never have fully developed meanings.
- There are an infinite number of ways something can be communicated.

- The meaning will change (or develop) as a message is explained more fully, utilising more of the ways it can be communicated.
- Good communication involves interaction. It is not just “A” telling

“B”; it should also involve “B” responding, then “A” replying to the response. In other words, there should be feedback.

The following diagram explains the basic pathways involved in communication.



There are two main forms of communication:

- Verbal Communication
- Non-verbal Communication

Verbal communication is communication that makes use of words and sounds, such as:

- Speaking
- Mmms/aahs etc.