

Communicating Clearly

Participant guide

Communicating clearly means saying things in a way others can easily understand the first time. Clear communication helps service run smoothly, prevents mix-ups, and makes the people you work with feel respected.

Warm-up

- Think of a time someone explained something so well it just clicked. What made it clear?
- Think of a time you followed unclear directions and it went wrong. What was missing?
- Why is it sometimes hard to explain something you understand perfectly in your own head?

Learn

Communicating clearly means getting your message across so the other person understands it the first time, without having to guess what you meant. The goal isn't to sound impressive. It's to be understood.

Clear communicators do a few things well:

- **Lead with the point.** Say the main message first, then add the details. Don't make people wait to find out why you're talking.
- **Keep it simple.** Use plain words and cut anything the listener doesn't need. More words often means less clear.
- **Put it in order.** Walk through steps or ideas in a sequence that's easy to follow: first, next, last.
- **Match your audience.** You'd explain something differently to a younger child than to an adult. Skip words and shorthand the other person won't know.
- **Check that it landed.** Watch for confused faces and ask, "Does that make sense?" Being clear is the speaker's job, not the listener's.

See the difference. Someone asks how to get to the community center:

Unclear: "So you go down a ways, and there's the thing by where the old store used to be, and you kind of turn and it's not too far after that."

Clear (point first): "It's on Main Street. Go straight two blocks, turn right at the gas station, and it's the third building on your left."

The first answer makes the listener do all the work. The second hands them the path.

Why this matters in service and in life. In service, clear communication means volunteers know what to do, the people you're helping understand you, and good plans don't fall apart over a misunderstanding. Beyond service, it's the skill behind a strong interview answer, a clear request for help, a text that doesn't get taken the wrong way, and any moment you need someone to follow your lead.

Two tools to use today:

- **Point First.** Say your main message in the very first sentence. Details come after.
- **The One-Sentence Test.** Before you explain, boil it down to one clear sentence. If you can't, you're not ready to say it yet.

Try it now (2–3 minutes). In pairs, explain how to do a simple everyday task (make a sandwich, tie a shoe, get from this room to the front door) in five sentences or fewer, using Point First. Your partner says "got it" or "I'm lost." Then switch.

Serve

You'll practice what you just learned in a real service activity today.

Reflect

After serving, talk about these together:

- What was hardest: leading with the point, cutting extra words, or putting things in order?
- Where did your first attempt confuse someone? What fixed it?
- How is being clear an act of respect for the other person's time and effort?
- Where else in your life, with friends, family, teachers, or a future boss, would clearer communication help you?

Then finish one or both sentences:

One way I'll communicate more clearly this week is...

Something I made clearer for someone else was...
