

Communicating Clearly

The skill: 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.

FACILITATOR NOTES

Time. about 60–90 minutes, run in one sitting. Works in a classroom, youth group, or club. Option A needs no materials or setup; Options B, C, and D use a real service activity arranged ahead of time.

Service today. Pick one option in Serve below and set it up before you begin.

Warm-up (5–10 minutes)

FACILITATOR NOTES

Keep this quick, short answers are great. Read the questions together.

- 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 (15–20 minutes)

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 (25–40 minutes)

Today you'll put this into practice in a real service activity. Here are ways to do it:

Option A — Clarity makeover *(no cost, no prep, works in any setting)*

Find one thing nearby that confuses people: a hard-to-follow sign, a cluttered set of instructions, a sign-up sheet, directions to a room or event. As a group, rewrite or redraw it so anyone could understand it instantly. Clear it with whoever is in charge of that space, then put your better version in place. Making something easier for the next person is a small but real service.

Option B — Teach it clearly *(low cost, a bit more effort)*

Pick a simple, useful skill you can teach in five to ten minutes (how to use a tool, a phone setting, a card game, a study trick, a stretch). Plan it with Point First and clear steps, then teach it to someone who'd actually benefit: a younger kid, a peer, a family member. Afterward, ask them to show it back to you, so you know your explanation worked.

Prepare ahead. As the facilitator, you'll arrange ahead of time who the group will teach, a younger class, a peer group, or family members invited in, so there's a real audience ready.

Option C — Write it for others *(more effort; produces something a group can use)*

Create one clear, genuinely useful piece of communication for your group or a local organization: a simple flyer for an event, a one-page “what to expect” for new volunteers, easy instructions for a recurring task, or a short announcement. Draft it, test it on someone outside the project (“Is anything confusing?”), revise, and hand the finished version to the people who'll use it.

Prepare ahead. As the facilitator, you'll settle ahead of time who the writing is for and what they need, a local organization, a club, or new volunteers, so the group makes something real and used. JustServe.org can help find an organization that could use it.

Option D — Volunteer at a welcome or information desk *(formal volunteer role, set up ahead)*

Places that serve the public, libraries, food pantries, community centers, and shelters, often need a friendly person to greet visitors, explain how things work, and point them where to go. Take a shift where your job is to communicate clearly and kindly to people who may be new, confused, or nervous. Search JustServe for a local library, pantry, or community center, or ask one directly about a greeter or front-desk role.

Prepare ahead. As the facilitator, you'll arrange a shift with a library, pantry, or community center ahead of time, and confirm the tasks, timing, and any adult supervision youth need.

Before you go (all options): Stay in public, supervised spaces, work with a partner, and have your mentor approve anything you'll post, hand out, or give to an organization. If you'll talk with people outside your group, let your mentor help set it up.

Reflect (10 minutes)

FACILITATOR NOTES

After serving, talk through a few of these together, then give everyone quiet time to write.

What was the hardest: leading with the point, cutting extra words, or putting things in order?

Where did your first attempt confuse someone? What fixed it?

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...
