

1.1 The Purpose of Communication

Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings between individuals or groups. It is not only about “talking”—it includes listening, interpreting, and responding.

In **General Paper (GP)**, communication matters because most tasks involve interacting with ideas: you must understand arguments, present yours clearly, and persuade the reader or examiner effectively.

The Main Purposes of Communication

1) Information Sharing

One of the most obvious purposes of communication is to transfer facts and data.

- Examples: news reports, weather updates, government statements, meeting minutes, research findings.
- Why it matters: people cannot make informed decisions without accurate information.

2) Persuasion and Influence

Communication is often used to change or reinforce beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours.

- Examples:
 - advertisements convincing you to buy a product
 - political speeches shaping public support
 - peer pressure affecting someone's choices.

Key idea: *persuasion works best when the message is credible, emotionally relatable, and logically strong.*

3) Social Interaction (Building Relationships)

People communicate to connect with others and maintain social bonds.

- Examples: greetings, small talk, asking after someone's wellbeing, celebrating events together.
- Why it matters: strong relationships depend on mutual understanding, trust, and respect.

4) Education and Training

Communication helps people learn knowledge and skills.

- **Examples:** teachers explaining concepts, tutorials, coaching sessions, workplace training.

Key idea: *learning requires both explanation and comprehension—so the learner must be able to interpret the message*

5) Emotional Expression

Communication allows people to express feelings and reduce emotional isolation.

- **Examples:** showing joy, sympathy, anger, gratitude, disappointment.
- Why it matters: when emotions are properly expressed, relationships become healthier and misunderstandings reduce.

6) Decision Making

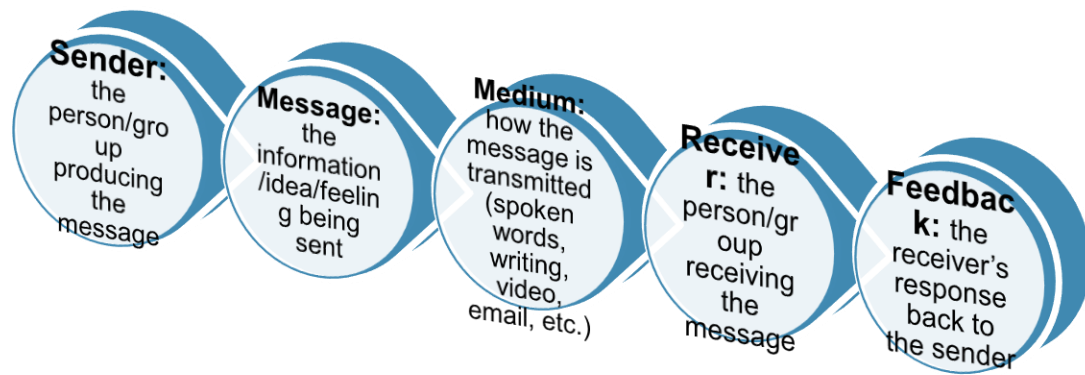
Group decision-making depends on communication—ideas need to be shared and evaluated.

- **Examples:** team meetings, family discussions, student council debates.

Key idea: *feedback and negotiation help groups reach consensus or choose the best option.*

The Communication Cycle (Sender → Receiver + Feedback)

For communication to be effective, it must include:



Why feedback is crucial

Without feedback, communication becomes **one-way**, meaning:

- the sender cannot confirm if the message was understood
- misunderstandings may grow quickly
- the receiver may interpret the message differently from what the sender intended

In real life and in GP writing, feedback can be seen as:

- editing drafts based on comments
- adjusting tone according to the audience's reaction
- revising arguments if they are unclear

1.2 Forms of Communication

Communication usually happens in **three main forms**, each with different strengths and limitations. In practice, they often overlap.

1) Written Communication

Includes letters, emails, reports, essays, and SMS.

Advantages

- **Permanent record:** important details can be referenced later
- **Can be revised:** you can improve accuracy and clarity before sending
- **Suitable for complex ideas:** writing allows detailed explanation and careful organization

Disadvantages

- **No immediate feedback:** misunderstandings may go unnoticed until later
- **Time-consuming:** reading and writing take more time than speaking
- **Depends on literacy and language ability:** the receiver must understand the writing level and vocabulary

GP example: your essay is written communication—clarity, structure, and evidence are essential.

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2) Verbal (Oral) Communication

Includes face-to-face conversations, phone calls, and speeches.

Advantages

- **Immediate feedback:** you can clarify instantly (“Did you mean...?”)
- **Tone conveys emotion:** tone of voice, speed, and emphasis affect meaning
- **Faster than writing:** useful for quick discussions

Disadvantages

- **No permanent record** unless recorded
- **Easy to forget:** spoken words may be remembered inaccurately over time
- **Affected by noise or unclear speech:** distractions or poor articulation reduce understanding

GP Link: *in presentations or spoken explanations ,tone and clarity influence persuasion.*

3) Non-Verbal Communication (Silent Language)

Non-verbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, posture, and how people use space. It can strengthen a message—or contradict it.

Key Types

- **Body Language:** posture, gestures, movement
 - **Example:** crossed arms can signal defensiveness (sometimes)
- **Facial Expressions:** smiling, frowning, eye contact
 - **Example:** eye contact often signals attentiveness and confidence
- **Paralanguage:** tone, pitch, volume, speaking speed (not the words themselves)
 - **Example:** speaking softly may seem uncertain; loud volume may seem aggressive
- **Proxemics:** distance between people
 - **Example:** too close can feel intrusive; too far can feel cold

Important point: *non-verbal cues can create impressions even when the spoken words are neutral.*

1.3 Effective Skills in Communication

To communicate well in GP and in real life, people need mastery of the **four pillars**:

1) Listening (Active Listening)

Active listening means you do not just “hear”—you fully understand.

What to do:

- Pay attention without multitasking
- Maintain appropriate eye contact
- Avoid interrupting
- Ask clarifying questions
- Summarise the other person’s point to confirm understanding

Why it matters: misunderstanding usually starts when people listen only to reply, instead of listening to understand.

2) Speaking (Clarity & Conciseness)

Good speakers express ideas so others can follow easily.

Key elements:

- Use **simple, direct language**
- Speak at a **comfortable volume**
- Adjust tone to match purpose (formal for serious topics)
- Organise ideas logically (e.g., point → explanation → example)
- Be confident without sounding aggressive

GP link: even when writing, you are “speaking to the examiner” through your argument. Clarity is still essential.

3) Reading (Critical Analysis)

Reading skill is not just understanding words—it's interpreting meaning.

How to read effectively:

- Skim for main ideas (what the paragraph is mainly saying)
- Scan for key details (numbers, facts, names, dates)
- Identify the author's purpose (inform? persuade? criticise?)
- Detect tone and bias (are they supporting or opposing something?)
- Understand implicit meaning ("hidden" messages)

4) Writing (Coherence & Structure)

Writing is often the most tested form in GP.

To write well:

- Make ideas flow logically (coherence)
- Use clear paragraphing (each paragraph should focus on one main idea)
- Follow correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Use appropriate linking words (however, therefore, moreover, nevertheless)
- Provide examples/evidence to strengthen arguments

GP exam significance: Structure and logic affect marks as much as language.

1.4 Role of Media in Communication

Media is the system that carries messages to large audiences. It shapes how people receive information and how they interpret events. Media influences both individual thinking and public behaviour.

Traditional vs New Media

- **Traditional Media:** radio, TV, newspapers
 - Often follows professional editorial processes
- **New Media:** social media, blogs, podcasts, livestreams
 - Faster and more interactive, but varies in reliability

Key Roles of Media

1) Information / Surveillance

Media provides updates on events happening locally and globally.

- **Example:** breaking news, public announcements

2) Education

Media teaches through documentaries, interviews, explanations, and learning content.

- **Example:** science channels, news explainers

3) Watchdog Role

Investigative journalism holds institutions accountable.

- **Example:** uncovering fraud, corruption, or negligence

4) Agenda Setting

Media influences what the public discusses by choosing which topics receive attention.

- **Example:** if many platforms focus on one issue, it becomes more “important” in public minds

5) Socialisation

Media shapes culture, norms, and values.

- **Example:** advertisements promoting certain lifestyles
- **Example:** popular entertainment shaping trends and attitudes

Extra note (important for GP):
media can inform, but it can also shape opinions through framing, selective reporting, and sensationalism.

1.5 Communicating in Context (Target Audience)

Communication depends heavily on **context**—the situation and environment in which the message is delivered. It also depends on the **target audience**, meaning who you are communicating with.

Why context matters

Even the same message can be understood differently depending on:

- where it is said
- when it is said
- who receives it
- the relationship between sender and receiver
- cultural beliefs and social norms

Understanding Context

1) Physical Context

Where the communication happens.

- **Example:** discussing in a classroom vs. in a football stadium
 - tone and formality change

2) Social-Cultural Context

The relationship and cultural background between people.

- **Example:** communication styles differ across cultures
- **Example:** taboos and etiquette affect what is acceptable to say

3) Chronological Context

Timing matters.

- **Example:** during an exam period, the audience may be stressed and less receptive
- **Example:** after a major event, people may interpret messages emotionally

Analysing the Target Audience

Before communicating, consider:

- **Age and gender:** different language and sensitivity level
- **Education level:** simplify or explain technical terms
- **Cultural background:** respect beliefs and avoid offence
- **Interests and needs:** focus on what the audience cares about
- **Expectations and attitudes:** if they are already skeptical, you need stronger evidence

GP Exam Tip

In GP, the "*target audience*" is usually an **academic examiner**, so you should:

- use a formal tone
- write logically with clear reasoning
- show critical thinking (not only opinions)
- use suitable vocabulary (but avoid unnatural or overly complex words)
- support ideas with evidence/examples and explain their relevance