

# Report on Gender Differences in Communication

Prepared for  
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## I. Executive Summary

Communication is crucial in every aspect of our lives. It is part of everyday business and personal interactions. We could do nothing without some form of communication. So knowing how crucial it is why are there still so many occurrences of miscommunication. First we need to look at what stands in the way of good communication. These obstacles are called barriers and include such things as... (Bell, 2006, p. 32-34)

- Physical Barriers
- Cultural Barriers
- Experiential Barriers
- Perceptual Barriers
- Motivational Barriers
- Emotional Barriers
- Organizational Barriers
- Linguistic Barriers
- Nonverbal Barriers
- Competition Barriers

Overcoming these barriers is key to clear communication in the business world and our own personal lives. If everyone can be aware of the differences that are present and consciously try to work with them rather than against them we will all reap the benefits.

One major barrier in communication is the difference between men and women's communication styles. These differences are fairly evident to everyone, and are sometimes used as the basis for jokes. Ever heard the one about the man who stopped for directions? Me neither. To adapt to someone's differences they first must be explored and then you must have a plan to overcome them.

## II. Introduction

As stated before, to overcome communication barriers we need to know what they are. They are usually many and varied in degrees. To focus on one is sometimes a daunting task but the one that affects all of us on a daily basis, whether you realize it or not, is the cultural barrier.

This barrier encompasses communication issues between 2 different cultures. More specifically, we are looking at communication between men and women. Yes, the communication barriers between men and woman can be classified as cultural barriers, because as a society men and women have different personal attributes and goals. They are brought up differently and usually within the norms of their given gender.

Not only has our upbringing separated us, the media in large is continuing this separation. Mulvany stated, "The beauty, diet, and advertising industries are the most obvious, best researched examples of contemporary, self-conscious myth-makers who control cultural concepts of gender" (1994, from the introduction).

Therefore by educating ourselves on how differently members of the opposite gender communicate, we will promote understanding and lower miscommunication between men and women.

If you were given the job to give an oral report to a room full of professionals from Japan, you would do your research on that culture. Many things would need to be brought to your attention so you could bridge this culture gap. By doing your research you can assure that your audience will receive the exact message that you intended them to get. Very rarely is this process done when speaking or working with a member of the opposite gender. This oversight needs to change.

### III. Areas of Difference in Communication Style

#### Reasons to communicate

John Gray, author of “Mars and Venus in the Workplace”, stated that men have only one reason to communicate and women have four. Knowing why the other person is speaking can help bring a much needed insight into the conversation. Gray used these examples to further describe the reasons why men and women choose to communicate.

Reason to communicate	Execution
To make a point	<b>Men:</b> Use the least amount of words possible to give or receive information. Only use words to make a point. <b>Women:</b> Use words to convey expressions among other reasons.
Give and receive emotional support	<b>Women:</b> By expressing and venting their own negative feelings a women can give and receive support.
To relieve tension	<b>Women:</b> Talk out a problem or series of problems to help validate her feelings and therefore reduce her stress level.
To discover a point	<b>Women:</b> Talk in a circular fashion around the subject to help jog her memory about what she actually wants to say.

(2002, pg.28-31)

Even though men may not understand the other reasons for communicating they should not block them out completely. Women communicate for many reasons, and men should be aware of these reasons to help better understand women’s communication.

#### Directness vs. Indirectness

Gray also stated that men are more direct in their communication style than women are (2002, p.172). This can cause miscommunication because women tend not to ask for exactly what they want; they have a more subtle way about their communication. Therefore, men have lots of room to hear things other than what she is saying. Here are a few examples Gray provided to illustrate this type of miscommunication.

Brief and Direct. What she should say:	Indirect. What she should not say:	What he may hear when she is not direct:
Would you check out what happened to the package?	That package still has not arrived.	You haven’t been on top of this delivery. You should be more responsible.

Would your department take care of making this change?	Your department is responsible for making this change.	It is your fault that this didn't happen.
Would you take charge of handling this?	This has not worked out at all.	I am not pleased with your work.

(2002, p. 173)

### Emotional E-mails

Rosetti explained that men use more aggressive expressions in their emails than women do. He conducted a study to analyze the emails for expressions from both men and women in the categories of aggressiveness and supportiveness. He used 82 emails from various topics; 56.1% of them were written by men and 43.9% of them by women (1998, section on Analysis According to Gender).

Rosetti's study resulted in the following data...(1998, section on Analysis According to Gender)

Women ♀

- Used far less aggressive language than men
- Used only 5 expressions to convey aggressiveness and/or sarcasm
- Used more supportive language choices
- Used 18 supportive expressions

Men ♂

- Used more aggressive language than women
- Used 12 expressions to convey aggressiveness and/or sarcasm
- Used far less supportive language choices
- Used only 6 supportive expressions

From the results of Rosetti's study it is obvious that women use a more supportive language than men do, and men use a more aggressive language. Knowing and understanding these trends can help in bridging the communication gap between men and women.

## IV. Solution

### Reason to Communicate

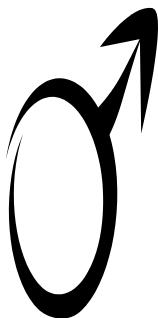


First, understand why the other person is speaking. Men usually speak or communicate for the sole purpose of getting his point across, but women can have many reasons. Use the previous table to help identify why she is communicating. She could be just blowing off some steam and not really wanting to convey a message at all. On the other hand, she may want some type of feedback. Understanding why she is speaking can help immensely in the final understanding of her message if there is one at all.

### Directness vs. Indirectness



Women, men for the most part will tell you exactly what they want so reading into their questions is not the answer. Instead you need to look at your own statements and questions. Be as direct as possible. Do not be afraid to ask for exactly what you want. Use words like “would” and “will” instead of “could” or “can” (Gray, 2002, p.174). Another item to remember is when asking questions in an indirect way you are giving him options on what he should do, when you should be telling him exactly what you want him to do (Koonce, 1997, p.3).

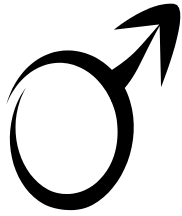


Men, remember that women are by nature less direct than men. Instead of becoming defensive over a vague statement ask her exactly what she wants from you. It may take a few questions of your own to get to the bottom of what she expects of you. These follow up questions should be asked tactfully and in a manner to gain more information. Also remember that women tend to ask more questions than men (Thierderman, 2007, section on Asking Questions). Women do this to show support and cultivate relationships, not to annoy you with endless questions. Be understanding and supportive with your answers.

### Emotional E-mails



Women, there is fine line between being aggressive and overly aggressive. You must find a middle road when trying to communicate. A women’s supportive nature can get her in over her head at times. The inability for most women to say “no” is a prime example of this. She may take on project after project without saying “no” to avoid being too aggressive (McGinn, 2001, second half of article). Do not be afraid to say “no”. It is a better choice than failing at the several projects that you have taken on.



Men, always wait at least two hours after writing an email or other correspondence before sending it. This should give you plenty of time to cool off and re-read what you wrote. Using this time rule will help cut down on overly aggressive word choices. This will help communication because your reader will feel less threatened by your words and more open to understand them.

### Finally, a few additional tips from the experts

McGinn stated that women could improve their communication skills if they keep these few tips in mind.



- Use analogies familiar to men to help explain complex topics
- “Speak in bullet form” (2001, second half of the article)
- Avoid using “feeling” words
- Don’t turn your sentences into questions by using an inflection at the end of your statements (2001, second half of the article).

Tingley stated that men should keep these points in mind to improve their communication skills in future situations.



- Keep a precise, concise structure of communication in mind
- Add people, feelings, and relationships to your content of conversations
- Use Active Listening Skills
- Use a win-win competitive style, not win-lose (Tinley, p.84)



## V. Conclusion

There are many barriers in the ever growing world of communication. The most basic but wide spread barrier is the difference between men and women. This cultural barrier can cause a lot of misunderstanding in the work place and disrupt productivity immensely.

These differences in communication styles are a starting point for everyone to try to work with our differences instead of against them. Men communicate for the sole purpose of getting a point across as where women might have several reasons to communicate.

Whether a man's direct approach or a women's indirect approach, we must understand that each is different and deserves a well thought out response. Sometime's what is being said may be hidden and needs to be brought up to the surface for clear communication to happen.

As previously stated, men are more aggressive in their word choices than females. This can be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage. The key is to find the middle-ground between being a push-over and an overly aggressive communicator.

Men and women communicate on two different levels in today's society. The sooner we openly identify the differences and work to overcome these obstacles, the better off we all are. Together we can work on making a common language style that can be expressed and understood by both genders.



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