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# The Basic Elements of the Communication Process

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## Definition, Models, and Examples

If you've texted your friend or given a business presentation, then you have engaged in [communication](#). Any time two or more people get together to exchange messages, they are engaging in this basic process. Although it seems simple, communication is actually quite complex, with a number of components.

### Definition

The term *communication process* refers to the exchange of information (a [message](#)) between two or more people. For communication to succeed, both parties must be able to exchange information and understand each other. If the flow of information is blocked for some reason or the parties cannot make themselves understood, then communication fails.

### The Sender

The communication process begins with the *sender*, who is also called the *communicator* or *source*. The sender has some kind of

information—a command, request, or idea—that he or she wants to share with others. In order for that message to be received, the sender must first encode the message in a form that can be understood and then transmit it.

## The Receiver

The person to whom a message is directed is called the *receiver* or the *interpreter*. In order to comprehend the information from the sender, the receiver must first be able to receive the sender's information and then decode or interpret it.

## The Message

The *message* or *content* is the information that the sender wants to relay to the receiver. It is relayed between the parties. Put all three together and you have the communication process as its most basic.

## The Medium

Also called the *channel*, the *medium* is the means by which a message is transmitted. Text messages, for example, are transmitted through the medium of cell phones.

## Feedback

The communication process reaches its final point when the message has been successfully transmitted, received, and understood. The receiver, in turn, responds to the sender, indicating comprehension. [Feedback](#) may be direct, such as a written or verbal response, or it may take the form of an act or deed in

response.

## Other Factors

The communication process isn't always so simple or smooth, of course. These elements can affect how information is transmitted, received, and interpreted:

**Noise:** This can be any sort of interference that affects the message being sent, received, or understood. It can be as literal as static over a phone line or esoteric as misinterpreting a local custom.

**Context:** This is the setting and situation in which communication takes place. Like noise, context can have an impact on the successful exchange of information. It may have a physical, social, or cultural aspect to it.

## The Communication Process in Action

Brenda wants to remind her husband, Roberto, to stop by the store after work and buy milk for dinner. She forgot to ask him in the morning, so Brenda texts the reminder to Roberto. He texts back and then shows up at home with a gallon of milk under his arm. But something's amiss: Roberto bought chocolate milk, and Brenda wanted regular milk.

In this example, the sender is Brenda. The receiver is Roberto. The medium is a [text message](#). The code is the English language they're using. And the message itself: Remember the milk! In this case, the feedback is both direct and indirect. Roberto texts a photo of milk at the store (direct) and then come home with it (indirect). However, Brenda did not see the photo of the milk because the

message didn't transmit (noise), and Roberto didn't think to ask what kind of milk (context).