# 4 types of noise that disrupt communication (the non-technical problem all podcasters face)

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6-7 minutes



Noise interferes with communication.

And because **podcasting is an act of communication**, noise is a problem for podcasters.

But sometimes noise can't be fixed with anything technical. It's a different kind of problem that needs a different kind of solution.

## Podcasting is an act of verbal communication

There have been many models and diagrams of communication

throughout the years, but here it is in its simplest form.

- You speak.

- The listener listens.

- The listener speaks.

- You listen.

However, missing from that simple description of communication is what we call noise.

**Noise is *anything* that interferes with communication.**

Noise can happen on your side as the speaker (podcaster). Or it can happen on the listener's side. Or it can happen somewhere in between.

## 4 types of noise that can disrupt communication

[The four types of noise are physical, physiological, psychological, and semantic](#).

As I describe those four types of noise, I'll do so from a podcaster's perspective.

### 1. Physical noise interferes with communication

Physical noise is interference that is *external* to both speaker and listener; it hampers the physical transmission of the signal or message.

Examples of physical noise:

- loud party at the neighbors while you're trying to record

- loud kids who don't want to take their nap

- irritating hum of your computer, air conditioner, or heater.

## 2. Physiological noise interferes with communication

Physiological noise is created by barriers within the sender or receiver.
Examples of [physiological noise on the podcaster's side](#):

- articulation problems

- mumbling

- talking too fast

- talking too slow

- forgetting to pause

- forgetting to breathe

An example of physiological noise on the listener's side: hearing problems. Maybe the listener can't hear high tones as clearly as they used to. For some, low tones are the problem. Their difficulty in literally hearing words and sounds becomes physiological noise.

## 3. Psychological noise interferes with communication

Psychological noise is *mental interference* in the speaker or listener.

Three examples of psychological noise are wandering thoughts, preconceived ideas, and sarcasm.

## "Wandering thoughts" can be a kind of psychological noise

This is primarily a listener problem. If you're trying to communicate a concept in your podcast, "wandering thoughts" is an obstacle

because your listener may be distracted and have difficulty keeping up with you. This is often a problem when talking about abstract ideas.

Sometimes as podcasters, *we* cause a listener's thoughts to wander, especially if we talk too fast, too slow, or fail to pause.

But occasionally "wandering thoughts" can be a podcaster problem, too. Have you ever started talking about one point only to find yourself lost talking about something completely unrelated? It takes a lot of concentration (and maybe planning) to stay focused.

**"Preconceived ideas" can be a kind of psychological noise**

Another type of psychological noise is when people think they already know something. That noise interferes with a listener's willingness to hear a new perspective.

Other preconceived ideas include biases, prejudices, presuppositions, and closed-mindedness.

When there is psychological noise like this, you have to work harder than usual to make sure you're communicating clearly.

**"Sarcasm" can be a kind of psychological noise**

If you don't care to actually persuade someone to see things your way, then sarcasm is the easy way.

*Sarcasm is noise to your listener unless your listener already agrees with you*.

If your listener disagrees with you, then sarcasm guarantees they won't pay attention to your message.

Sarcasm can also rile them up. When they come back at you with their knee-jerk response, that'll be noise to you.

And then true communication stops.

Finally, there is another type of noise that appears to be psychological, but it's actually linguistic and deserves its own category.

**Semantic noise interferes with communication**

Semantic noise is interference created when the speaker and listener have different meaning systems.

Maybe when I use a word, you have a slightly different meaning in mind. This can cause confusion.

**Jargon can be semantic noise**

Jargon is a fantastic linguistic shortcut. If everyone listening agrees and understands the terminology, then jargon makes communication quicker and clearer.

However, if listeners have different definitions of the terminology, then jargon becomes noise. This is especially noisy to people outside your particular job or field.

**Abstract ideas can be semantic noise**

Another kind of semantic noise is when your words and sentences are nebulous or ambiguous.

Some people find it almost impossible to speak concretely.

This is a problem I have, which is one reason I need to write (even

when I'm podcasting). But even when I've written, I sometimes discover my words were not concrete enough.

I'm actually concerned that I have been too abstract with my words in this article. If I have, then you might have misunderstood me. And then my own semantic noise has interfered with our communication.

## Reducing the noise

All communication contains noise. You can't get rid of the noise for every person who listens to you.

But you can work to reduce the noise. Here are three ways.

**1. Make your language more precise.**

Choose words that you know will be understood by your listeners.

**2. Practice**

Practice speaking. Practice articulating. Practice using your recording and editing tools.

**3. Invite feedback**

Sometimes listeners hesitate before they respond.

So invite feedback. Often.

Once you start hearing from your listeners, you can begin to tweak your message so it becomes clearer and better understood.

## Feedback from you

What are some ways you've reduced noise?

What noise is interfering with our communication?

Or has any of this sparked an idea you would like to share or a question you would like to ask?

Whatever it is, I would like to hear your feedback.

[Click contact for ways to respond](#).