



# Effective Communication

Communication breakdown can be more than frustrating, it can be detrimental. It is always important to say what you mean and mean what you say, but in today's world there are many channels through which to say it. So how do you choose the appropriate channel?

When I was growing up — and yes, I am dating myself — the only way to communicate with someone was face-to-face, on the phone or by sending a letter. Choosing the method through which to communicate was mostly determined by geographic location since long-distance calls had a considerable cost to them: Grandma in Florida got a letter, my best friend in town got a phone call and face-to-face happened at home or at school.

Today, in addition to phone, letter and face-to-face, communication channels include texting, messaging, email, social media, and video calls. So how do you know which channel is the best choice? There are several factors to consider and answering Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How Many will determine the How.

**Who**  
With whom are you communicating? Is it a personal or business contact? Do you have a casual or formal relationship? Generational differences are a factor as are comfort levels with different forms of communication.

**What**  
What do you want to communicate? Is it personal or business? Is it informational? Is it serious or laugh-inducing?

**Where**  
Where are you and where are they? Are you in the same house, office building, city, state, country?

**When**  
When are you communicating? Is it during business hours or would people be at home? Is the person you are communicating with in the same time zone as you?

**Why**  
Why are you communicating? Is it an urgent message? Do you want to inform or entertain? Are you seeking information?

**How Many**  
How many communications will it take to complete the communication? Is it long or short (how many words)? Does it require a lot of back-and-forth (conversation)? Is it a one-way communication (transmission)?

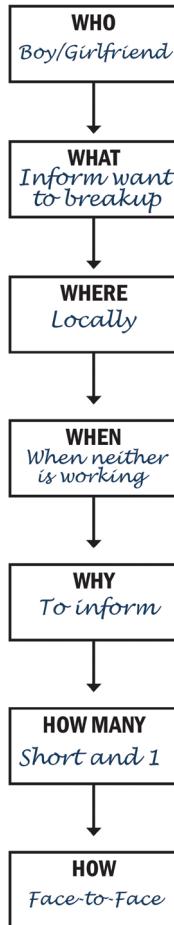
**How**  
Use the decision flow chart (to the left) and communication channel matrix (next page) to help you determine How to communicate best. Please note that there are exceptions. There may be a professional relationship which has developed into a personal relationship and there is an understanding that personal communication is appropriate.

*The Who, What, Where, When, Why and How Many components will be expanded in future articles.*

**Professional Example**  
Need to talk to customer about a part



**Personal Example**  
Need to breakup with boy/girlfriend



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# Communication Channels: Determining the How

Email	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How Many Words/Replies Transmission/Conversation
	Professional	Informational/Inquiry	Work email	Any time (don't expect reply until business hours)	To inform/inquire	Few or many words Transmission or conversation
	Personal	Informational/Inquiry/ Entertaining	Personal email	Any time	To inform/inquire/entertain	Few or many words Transmission or conversation
Face-to-Face	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How Many Words/Replies Transmission/Conversation
	Professional	Informational/Inquiry	Local — a place of their convenience	During work hours unless mutually agreed for after	Build relationships, get/give non-verbal feedback	Many words Conversation
	Personal	Informational/Inquiry/ Entertaining	Local — mutually decided upon location	During non-work hours	Build relationships, get/give non-verbal feedback	Many words Conversation
Letter/Note	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How Many Words/Replies Transmission/Conversation
	Professional	Informational/Inquire/ Gratitude/Invite	Sent to their workplace	As necessary	To inform/inquire/give personal touch/promote/invite	Few or many words Transmission
	Personal	Informational/Inquire/ Gratitude/Invite	Sent to their home	As necessary	To inform/inquire/give personal touch/promote/invite	Few or many words Transmission
Messaging	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How Many Words/Replies Transmission/Conversation
	Professional	Informational/Inquire/ Feedback	On their professional media channel (e.g., LinkedIn)	During their business hours	To inform/inquire/give feedback	Few or many words Transmission or conversation
	Personal	Informational/Inquire/ Entertaining	On their personal messaging channel (e.g., Messenger)	When you expect them to be awake and able to reply	To inform/inquire/entertain/ give feedback	Few or many words Transmission or conversation
Phone (Voice) Call	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How Many Words/Replies Transmission/Conversation
	Professional	Informational/Inquire	To their work/work cell	During their business hours	To inform/inquire	Few or many words Conversation
	Personal	Informational/Inquire	To their personal home/cell	When they are not working	To inform/inquire	Few or many words Conversation
Social Media	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How Many Words/Replies Transmission/Conversation
	Professional	Informational/Inquiry	On their professional media channel (e.g., LinkedIn)	Any time	To inform/inquire/give feedback	Few or many words Transmission or conversation
	Personal	Informational/Inquiry	On their personal media channel (e.g., Instagram)	Any time	To inform/inquire/give feedback/entertain	Few or many words Transmission or conversation
Text	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How Many Words/Replies Transmission/Conversation
	Professional	Informational/Inquire Generally Urgent	To their work cell	During business hours or as necessary for urgent info	To inform/ inquire	Few words Transmission or conversation
	Personal	Informational/Inquire/ Entertaining	To their personal cell	When you expect them to be awake and able to reply	To inform/inquire/entertain	Few words Transmission or conversation
Video Call	Who	What	Where	When	Why	How Many Words/Replies Transmission/Conversation
	Professional	Informational/Inquiry (Meeting or Interview)	Professional channel & professional environment	During their business hours	To inform/inquire/get or give non-verbal feedback	Few or many words Conversation
	Personal	Informational/Inquiry/ Entertaining	Personal channel when not working	During their non-work hours	To inform/inquire/entertain, get or give non-verbal feedback	Few or many words Conversation