

UNDERSTANDING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION



AGENDA

- Starter
- Shh... It Goes over Here
- What Am I Trying to Tell You?
- It's in the Delivery
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify nonverbal cues.

Students will analyze nonverbal cues to determine the messages they convey.

Students will demonstrate and apply nonverbal communication in real-life situations.

Students will evaluate the importance of nonverbal cues to communication.

Materials Needed

- Two pictures of faces, one displaying a positive emotion and one displaying a negative emotion (Starter)
- Copies of the “Square Puzzle Set” activity sheet, cut into pieces for each group of three students (Part I)

- Five index cards, each card stating one of these emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, or worry (Part II)
- Student- or teacher-developed scenarios from real life that lend themselves to obvious nonverbal messages (e.g., a disappointing exam result, reaction to a rumour) (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Show students the two pictures. Ask students to determine what emotion each image is showing. Have students explain their answers. Students should mention nonverbal cues evident in the facial expressions.

Explain to students that they will learn in this lesson how to interpret and use nonverbal communication.

Part I Shh... It Goes over Here (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students explore the concept of nonverbal communication by working on a puzzle with a small group.

1. Students work in groups of three to silently put together a square puzzle.

Organize students into groups of three. Give each group a cut-up copy of the "Square Puzzle Set" activity sheet. Read the following rules aloud to the class:

- Each team has seven minutes to put the puzzle together without speaking to each other.
- Any team that is talking or writing notes will be disqualified.
- When teams complete the puzzle, they should cover the solution and raise their hands. I will come to check the solution.

Suggest that as students work to solve the puzzle, they pay attention to the interaction within their group. Time the activity.

2. Students identify the nonverbal cues they used.

Ask teams to list what they observed as they were solving the puzzle.

Inquire how the team members communicated. Have students identify the positive and negative nonverbal messages that they saw during this activity and how these messages were conveyed. Student responses should include eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and body language. Write student responses where everyone can see. You will refer to this list in Part III.

3. Students discuss the difficulty of the task.

Ask students if the task was easy or difficult. Have students explain their answers.

Ask students what they felt as they first tried to solve the puzzle. Inquire if their feelings changed and if the nonverbal communication became easier as time passed.

4. Students analyze their experience.

Tell students that the puzzle would have been easier to solve if they had been allowed to speak, but you wanted them to experience nonverbal communication. Explain that there are many forms of communication other than speaking.

Have teams summarize their experience for each other and explain any insights that occurred to them during the game and the class discussion. Circulate the room and write down some of the insights that you overhear. Be sure to share at least one from each group with the entire class.

Ask students to name forms of communication that do not require speaking. Call on a volunteer to review the list of forms of communication nonverbally.

Part II What Am I Trying to Tell You? (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students experience and understand the power of nonverbal cues.

1. Students demonstrate nonverbal communication.

Ask for five volunteers. Give each volunteer an index card with an emotion written on it. Tell the volunteers to communicate to the class their assigned emotions using only nonverbal cues. Have students write down the emotions they think the volunteers were trying to convey.

As a class, have students share what they wrote down. Have the volunteers identify the emotion they each attempted to communicate.

2. Students explain why recognizing nonverbal cues can help them understand others.

Tell students that the volunteers communicated the emotions through gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Ask students to identify the gestures, facial expressions, and body language that the volunteers used to communicate the emotions. List the responses where everyone can see.

Inquire how recognizing the messages of nonverbal communication might be helpful. Direct students to the understanding that knowledge of nonverbal communication can help them recognize what an individual is really feeling and thinking.

3. Students explain how using nonverbal cues can help them communicate with others.

Have students identify how they want others to see them. Have them identify what image they might wish to project when interviewing for a job, when talking to a new student, or in other real-life situations. (Students might respond: friendly, confident, powerful, etc.) Ask students to model or explain how they might communicate these traits nonverbally.

Ask students to explain why effective nonverbal communication can be a valuable tool to use. Help them understand that effective nonverbal communication can strengthen the message that they wish to communicate.

4. Students summarize what they have learned.

Have students summarize what they have learned about nonverbal communication. If students need a jump-start, explain the following:

- We all experience nonverbal communication every day.
- We use it to understand what people are communicating to us.
- We send nonverbal messages through our facial expressions, body language, gestures, and eye contact.
- Effective nonverbal communication can make our messages stronger and clearer.

Part III It's in the Delivery (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students practice what they have learned about nonverbal communication by role-playing everyday situations.

1. Students prepare to role-play effective nonverbal communication.

Explain to students that they will role-play different scenarios in which nonverbal communication is an important method of getting a point across. Their goal in these role plays is to use their nonverbal communication skills to make the point effectively. Tell students that the class will evaluate each performance.

Have students return to their groups from Part I of this lesson. Provide each group with one of the real-life scenarios and have them prepare their role plays.

2. Students present their role plays.

Ask each group to present its role play to the class. Have students carefully observe the nonverbal communication that takes place. During a few of the role plays, tell the performers to freeze. Explain that when students hear this, they are to freeze in their current poses. Quietly tell one student in the role play to alter their nonverbal messages so that they conflict with the verbal messages that they are sending. After each scenario is presented, give the groups a minute or two to discuss the performances.

3. Students critique the performances.

Have the groups identify the nonverbal communication techniques used in each performance and evaluate their effectiveness. Clarify for students that they are not judging the acting performance, but weighing the appropriateness of the nonverbal communication used in the role play.

4. Students identify examples of good nonverbal communication.

After students have finished the performances and the evaluations, ask each group for an example from the scenarios of powerful and effective nonverbal communication.

5. Students discuss and analyze conflicting messages.

Ask students to recall the conflicting messages that were portrayed when you stopped some of the role plays. Ask students whether the verbal or nonverbal cues were stronger.

Conclusion *(2 minutes)*

Ask students to name examples of nonverbal communication that occur in their daily lives. Ask them how using nonverbal communication effectively can be a powerful tool. Elicit from students the following key points that were taught in this lesson:

- People communicate their thoughts and feelings nonverbally.
- Paying attention to facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and body language enables us to understand nonverbal messages.
- People send nonverbal messages constantly; we can learn to recognize and interpret others' nonverbal messages.
- People have the ability to control the nonverbal messages they send.

Student Assessment

1. Describe three situations in the last week in which you communicated something nonverbally.
2. Describe a situation in which someone's words say one thing and their nonverbal communication says something different.
3. Describe appropriate ways to communicate nonverbally with your friends, in class, and on a job interview.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn’t being said.”

Have students write about the meaning of this quote. Ask them to relate an experience that might support this quote.

Addressing Multiple Learning Modes

Ask students to observe other people and note the nonverbal communication they witness for a day.

Have the class discuss the nature of their observations (e.g., situations in which nonverbal communication was most evident, what was communicated).

Writing in Your Journal

Ask students to write about an incident in which nonverbal communication was an important part of a message they gave or received.

Using Technology

Have students watch a clip of the first segment of a popular sitcom. Play this clip with the sound turned off.

Ask students to predict the plot and describe the nonverbal communication that supports their guesses. Replay the clip with the sound on to allow them to determine the accuracy of their guesses.

Homework

Have students use international business and travel books to research appropriate nonverbal behavior in other countries.

Have students demonstrate and explain proper nonverbal etiquette in other parts of the world.

Additional Modes

Have students watch a clip from a court case. Ask students to examine the nonverbal communication in the interactions between the defendant, judge, and jury.

SQUARE PUZZLE SET

