

Communication to arrange communication is now normal

Level: Upper intermediate–advanced

Time: 90 minutes

Summary: This lesson is about how our ways of communicating have changed over the past few years, as a result of electronic communication. In this lesson, students:

1. study a text about how communication has changed;
2. write out a step-by-step procedure for communicating in a business setting;
3. discuss how they prefer to communicate with various groups of people.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

Group size: Any

Note: This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 7/2019.

Warmer

Working individually, students write down as many forms of communication as they can in three minutes. When the time is up, they should compare what they've written with other students.

Some suggested answers: *phone, text message, instant messaging, face-to-face conversation, email, letter, telephone or video conference, written memo, speech*

Key words

Students match the key words with the definitions and then find them in the article before reading carefully through the article and noticing how they are used in context. The words in the task are in the order that they appear in the article.

Key:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. recall | 6. contorts |
| 2. associate | 7. impromptu |
| 3. layer | 8. rude |
| 4. uptight | 9. indicate |
| 5. unscheduled | 10. suspect |

Expressions

In pairs, students find the expressions in the article, discussing what they think they mean and what other words they could use instead of these expressions. Students then ask and answer the questions that contain variations of the expressions.

Key:

1. arrive or land in
2. put in a phone number and call it either by touching the touchscreen or pressing numbers on the handset
3. make someone feel afraid or scared
4. make a quick visit to see someone
5. open the door to see who is there

Business communication

Students work in pairs or small groups and talk about what they normally do in the situations listed, e.g. Do they first send an email? Do they call someone's personal assistant? Do they consider the time zones involved? Do they check if any software updates are necessary? Then they should choose the situation that is the most complex, write down every step they go through in detail and then share this information with other students.

Discussion

In pairs or small groups, students discuss the first set of questions. Hold a short, whole-class feedback session afterwards. Then hold a group discussion about these more general communication questions. Do the students have similar or different opinions?

Webquest

In the article, the author says that her 'face contorts into a Munch-like Scream' at the thought of someone simply just stopping by to visit a friend without announcing their intention to do so first. The students find an image of Edvard Munch's 1893 painting, *The Scream*, and decide what kind of emotions they think the figure in the painting is portraying. Then, keeping these emotions in mind, they should say what, at work, makes them feel like the person in the painting.

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1 Warmer

Write down as many forms of communication as you can. You have three minutes.

Now compare your ideas with other students.

2 Key words

Match the key words in the box to the definitions below. Find and underline them in the article.

associate	contorts	impromptu	indicate	layer
recall	rude	suspect	unscheduled	uptight

- remember something _____
- someone you work with _____
- level in a process _____
- always behaving in a very correct way and unable to relax in informal situations

- not planned, or done at a time that was not expected _____
- twists into shapes that are not natural _____
- not planned or prepared _____
- not polite, socially unacceptable _____
- show that something is true or exists _____
- believe that something is true, especially something bad _____

Now read the article and notice how these words are used in context.

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“Communication to arrange communication is now normal”



Pop in to see someone when you're in the area? Or give someone a quick call? That's how it used to be, but not announcing yourself beforehand just isn't acceptable anymore.

Betty” – but Betty seems to be genuinely OK with impromptu arrivals.

I'd like to be more “Betty”, although I fear it's too late. Check online forums and you will see that most people now find it “rude” when a friend appears unexpectedly. Millennials, it is said, don't even answer the door. An entertaining thread on Twitter earlier this year began when someone in the US suggested young people were “killing the doorbell industry”. Any visitor they were expecting would text their approach. Obvs. Similar reports, found in sources ranging from *The Wall Street Journal* to *BuzzFeed News*, indicate that many youngsters find the doorbell alarming in the wrong sense.

The good news for those who face such angst is that the chance of anyone coming round is decreasing. The UK government's latest National Travel Survey found that between 2002 and 2017, the number of trips to visit friends fell by 30 per cent. The irony of us acquiring a highly developed sense of privacy and personal space in an era when we willingly share so much of our lives on social media is clear and, I suspect, complex. Still, a world in which one has 1,000 “friends” on Facebook but none that you'd be pleased to see walking up your garden path uninvited is somewhat saddening. Call me if you feel differently – but please email first.

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- 1 “Hi, Lis, would you be free for a phone call later this week?” This type of question drops into my office email almost daily – and I am guilty of sending the same enquiry to colleagues and business contacts in return.
- 2 The communication to arrange a communication is so normal that it's hard to recall how it felt in the time before email, when, if you wanted to speak to someone, you just (horror!) dialled their number. Nowadays, if a business associate calls unexpectedly, I immediately assume someone is in trouble – and quite possibly, that someone is me.
- 3 I've noticed that even friends have started texting to see when we might find a moment to speak. I hope it is nothing that I have done to appear unavailable for spontaneous conversation and rather that social media allows an additional layer of checking a person's free time. But it's all a bit uptight, isn't it?
- 4 Modern etiquette for pre-notification extends to our homes, where the idea of an unscheduled visitor fills many with dread. My mother's generation may be the last to say, “I popped in to see Betty on my way home from town.” When I hear this, my face contorts into a Munch-like Scream as I think, “poor

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3 Expressions

a. In pairs, find the following expressions in the article and decide what they mean.

1. drop into (an email inbox)
2. dial a number
3. fill someone with dread
4. pop in (to see someone)
5. answer the door

b. Now answer these questions, and discuss your answers with a partner.

1. When did you last pop in to see someone unannounced?
2. When should you not answer the door?
3. When something drops into your email inbox while you're working, how soon do you check to see what it is?
4. What do you do these days instead of dialling a number?
5. What fills you with dread?

4 Business communication

a. Talk about the actions and procedures you normally go through when . . .

- setting up a meeting in your place of work for four or more people
- discussing an issue with a business associate in a . . .
 - different city in your country
 - different country and time zone
- arranging a telephone conference
- arranging a video conference.

b. Choose one of the situations above, and write down all the steps you go through in order to set up and carry out this form of business communication.

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5 Discussion

a. How would you expect or prefer these people to communicate with you?

- your boss
- a business associate in another department, building or country
- your doctor's receptionist
- your tax office
- your child's teacher
- a shop assistant who needs to tell you that your order or repaired item is ready to collect
- your next-door neighbour
- your friend who lives abroad in a different time zone

Have any of these people tried to communicate with you in a way that annoyed you or that you thought was inappropriate? Give details.

b. Discuss these more general communication questions.

- How have your ways of communicating changed over the past five/ten/20 years?
- How has communication etiquette changed in this period of time?
- How have these changes in communication methods and style influenced communication? E.g. is it more efficient, more impersonal, more informal ...?

6 Webquest

- Find an image of Edvard Munch's 1893 painting, *The Scream*.
- What is the connection between this painting and the article?
- Describe the emotions you think the painting expresses.
- What, at work, makes you feel this way?