

Ronald B. Adler

Russell F. Proctor II

LOOKING OUT LOOKING IN

FIFTEENTH EDITION



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To

Neil Towne

whose legacy continues in these pages.

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PREFACE

Listening is arguably the most important communication skill of them all. That's certainly been true as we developed this new edition of *Looking Out Looking In*. Listening to our users has helped us refine the book you're holding, so it will address the concerns of both professors and students.

Before we began work on this 15th edition, we asked current and prospective users what we could do to best meet their needs. They told us they want an introduction to interpersonal communication that's clear, engaging, and concise. They said their text must reflect the way communication operates in today's world. And it has to be priced fairly.

You spoke, we listened, and you are now seeing the results.

New to This Edition

Users of *Looking Out Looking In* will find that the new edition has been improved in several ways while remaining true to the approach that has served more than one million students over four decades.

- **More Affordable Price**

We applaud Cengage Learning for making *Looking Out Looking In* more affordable to make it more accessible for students, especially at a time when budgets are tight and the costs of higher education are rising.

- **Extensive Coverage of Social Media**

The new Chapter 2 is entirely devoted to the role of mediated communication in interpersonal relationships. Topics include differences between mediated and face-to-face communication, the benefits and costs of social media, how gender and age influence the uses of mediated communication, and how to use social media competently to achieve personal and relational goals.

In addition to Chapter 2, new coverage of social media is integrated throughout the book. Topics include online impression management (Chapter 3), the impact of social media on emotion perception and expression (Chapter 5), nonverbal communication in mediated messages (Chapter 6), giving and receiving support online (Chapter 8), how social media shapes the rise and fall of close relationships (Chapter 9), and the role of social media in communication in families, friendships, and romantic relationships (Chapter 10).

- **New Examples from Popular Culture**

This edition is loaded with illustrations—now integrated into every chapter—of how communication operates in a variety of relationships. Television profiles include comedies like *Louie* and *Blackish* and dramas such as *Scandal* and *House of Cards*. Many other profiles come from popular films including *Boyhood*, *Dear White People*, *The Imitation Game*, and *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby*. Captioned photos of figures from the news also highlight how communication principles operate in today's world.

- **New Magazine-Style Readings**

Compelling readings have always distinguished *Looking Out Looking In*. This edition features a new lineup that shows how principles in the text operate in a wide range of settings and relationships. New readings explore whether software can communicate competently, how to juggle commitments with friends and romantic partners, how loneliness can be pervasive in a hyperconnected world, instagramming to project an idealized identity, saving lives by texting support, and how posting photos online can strengthen close relationships. Now, each reading is followed by a series of “Reflect” questions that help readers connect the material to their everyday lives.

- **Research Updates**

To reflect the latest communication scholarship, new research is cited throughout the book. Among the updated and expanded topics addressed are the expression of positive emotions (Chapter 5), striking a balance between power and politeness (Chapter 6), giving and receiving social support (Chapter 7), and the communication of love, commitment, and affection in romantic relationships (Chapter 10).

Interactive Learning with MindTap


MindTap for *Looking Out Looking In* is a fully online, highly personalized learning experience built upon *Looking Out Looking In*. MindTap combines student learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a singular Learning Path that guides students through the course. Instructors personalize the experience by easily customizing the existing content and learning tools with their own materials. The result: An easy-to-use learning system that is exactly right for your own unique situation.

- **Learning Path.** The MindTap experience begins with a chapter-specific Learning Path built around key student objectives. This intuitive navigator guides students to master the subject matter and provides immediate access to the resources they need along the way. MindTap delivers a suggested Learning Path right “out of the box,” ready for you to personalize your course. You control what students see and when they see it. Use it as-is or match to your syllabus exactly—hide, rearrange, add, and create your own content. Customize your Learning Path by:
 - changing due dates
 - reordering content
 - renaming course sections
 - moving or hiding chapters you don’t use
 - removing unneeded activities
 - engaging students by inserting campus- or course-specific resources, like handbooks, school catalogs, and web links, your favorite videos, activities, current events materials, or any resource you can upload to the Internet

Students see “Counts for a grade” flags to alert them to assignments due and personalized resources you add appear inline for a seamless experience that keeps students focused while they are in your course.

- **MindTap Reader.** The MindTap Reader is more than a digital version of a textbook. It is an interactive, learning resource built to create a digital reading experience based on how students assimilate information in an online environment. Videos and activities bring the book concepts to life. The robust functionality of the MindTap Reader allows learners to make notes, highlight text, and even find a definition right from the page. After completing the reading, students can review vocabulary with the flashcards and check their comprehension with chapter quizzes.
- **MindApps.** This suite of learning tools gives instructors the ability to manage and customize their course and students the tools they need to prepare for a course or exam—all from a single platform. Examples of apps include:
 - **ReadSpeaker®**, an online text-to-speech application that vocalizes, or “speech-enables,” the MindTap content
 - **Merriam-Webster MindApp**, which allows students to look up a word simply by highlighting it and selecting “Dictionary” on the contextual menu
 - **Notebook App** that captures notes and highlights students create in the MindTap Reader and links to the popular Evernote web-based note taking platform.
 - **MindTap Analytics**, a visual dashboard fueled by powerful analytics, allows educators to track learner engagement and class progress, while empowering students with information on where they stand and where they need to focus. Instructors can instantly access an in-depth analysis of each student to understand how engaged he or she is in the course, how often the student is accessing the solution, and what progress has been made within the course activities. Students can quickly see where they stand.
 - **ConnectYard App** allows you to bring in “virtual speakers” to discuss important issues with students. You can invite other classes—even outside your school—to join in.
 - **The RSS Feed App** can be used to bring current event topics into the classroom, making book content even more relevant.

If you want your students to have access to MindTap for this text, these resources can be bundled with every new copy of the text or ordered separately. Students whose instructors do not order these as a package with the text may purchase access to them at cengagebrain.com.

 Look for the MindTap icon in the pages of *Looking Out Looking In* to find MindTap resources related to the text.

What's Familiar

As always, the user-friendly approach of *Looking Out Looking In* connects scholarship and everyday life. Virtually every page spread contains an attention-grabbing assortment of materials that support the text: articles from print and online sources, poetry, cartoons, photographs, and profiles of popular films and television shows. A prominent treatment of ethical issues helps readers explore how to communicate in a principled manner. An extensive package of ancillary resources (described below) aims at helping students learn and instructors teach efficiently and effectively.

Looking Out Looking In presents communication not as a collection of techniques we use *on* others, but as a process we engage in *with* them. Readers also learn that even the most competent communication doesn't always seek to create warm, fuzzy relationships, and that even less personal interaction usually has the best chance of success when handled in a constructive, respectful manner.

The discussion of gender and culture is integrated throughout the book, rather than being isolated in separate chapters. The treatment of these important topics is nonideological, citing research that shows how other variables are often at least as important in shaping interaction. The basic focus of the chapters has remained constant, and Chapters 2 through 12 can be covered in whatever order works best for individual situations.

In-Text Learning Resources

Every chapter contains a variety of resources to help students understand and use the principles introduced in the text. These include:

Looking at Diversity profiles provide first-person accounts by communicators from a wide range of cultural, physical, ethnic, and occupational backgrounds. For example, new profiles in this edition describe a successful arranged marriage and how police officers can better understand and serve communities of color. These profiles help readers appreciate that interpersonal communication is shaped by who you are and where you come from.

On the Job features in every chapter highlight the importance of interpersonal communication in the workplace. Grounded in scholarly research, these features equip readers with communication strategies that enhance career success. New features in this edition discuss how to manage a professional identity, repair damaged workplace relationships, stay humble, and choose workplace battles wisely.

In Real Life transcripts describe how the skills and concepts from the text sound in everyday life. Seeing real people use the skills in familiar situations gives students both the modeling and confidence to try them in their own relationships. Dramatized versions of many of these transcripts are featured in the MindTap for *Looking Out Looking In*.

Activities in every chapter help readers engage with important concepts. Activities are labeled by type:

- *Pause and Reflect* boxes help readers understand how theory and research apply to their own lives.
- *Skill Builders* help readers improve their communication skills.
- *Ethical Challenges* offer wisdom about dilemmas that communicators face as they pursue their own goals.

Other Teaching and Learning Resources

Along with the text itself, *Looking Out Looking In* can be bundled with an extensive array of materials that make teaching and learning more efficient and effective.

- The **Advantage Edition of *Looking Out Looking In*** is available for instructors who are interested in an alternate version of the book. Part of the Cengage Learning Advantage Series, this paperback, black-and-white version of the complete book additionally offers a

built-in student workbook at the end of each chapter that has perforated pages so material can be submitted as homework.

- The **Student Activities Manual** has been revised by Sheryll Reichwein of Cape Cod Community College. It contains a wealth of resources to help students understand and master concepts and skills introduced in the text and will be available through the Instructor Companion Site.
- A comprehensive **Instructor's Resource Manual**, revised by Sheryll Reichwein, Cape Cod Community College, provides tips and tools for both new and experienced instructors. The manual also contains hard copy of over 1,200 class-tested exam questions, indexed by page number and level of understanding.
- **Instructor's Companion Website.** This website is an all-in one resource for class preparation, presentation, and testing for instructors. Accessible through Cengage.com/login with your faculty account, you will find an Instructor's Manual, Chapter-by-Chapter PowerPoint presentations, and Cengage Learning Testing files powered by Cognero.
- **Cengage Learning Testing, powered by Cognero.** Accessible through Cengage.com/login with your faculty account, this test bank contains multiple choice, true/false, and essay questions for each chapter. Cognero is a flexible, online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content. Create multiple test versions instantly and deliver them through your LMS platform from wherever you may be. Cognero is compatible with Blackboard, Angel, Moodle, and Canvas LMS platforms.
- Communication **Scenarios for Critique and Analysis Videos** include additional scenarios covering interviewing and group work. *Contact your Cengage Learning sales representative for details.*
- **Communication in Film III: Teaching Communication Courses Using Feature Films** by Russell F. Proctor II, Northern Kentucky University, expands on the film tips in each chapter of *Looking Out Looking In*. This guide provides detailed suggestions for using classic films to illustrate communication principles introduced in the text.
- Cengage Learning Engagement Services—a **full portfolio of support for students, instructors, and institutions alike**—is made possible through a dedicated staff of experienced, highly credentialed professionals. Proactive, start-to-finish support helps you get trained, get connected, and get the resources you need for the seamless integration of digital resources into your course. This unparalleled technology service and training program provides robust online resources, peer-to-peer instruction, personalized training, and a customizable program you can count on.
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Ronald B. Adler
Russell F. Proctor, II

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Since this is a book about interpersonal communication, it seems appropriate for us to introduce ourselves to you, the reader. The “we” you’ll be reading throughout this book isn’t just an editorial device: It refers to two real people—Ron Adler and Russ Proctor.

Ron Adler lives in Santa Barbara, California, with his wife, Sherri, an artist and photo researcher who selected most of the images in this book. Their three adult children were infants when early editions of *Looking Out Looking In* were conceived, and they grew up as guinea pigs for the field testing of many concepts in this book. If you asked them, they would vouch for the value of the information between these covers.

Ron spends most of his professional time writing about communication. In addition to helping create *Looking Out Looking In*, he has contributed to six other books about topics including business communication, public speaking, small group communication, assertiveness, and social skills. Besides writing and teaching, Ron teaches college courses and helps professional and business people improve their communication on the job. Cycling and hiking help keep Ron physically and emotionally healthy.



Russ Proctor is a professor at Northern Kentucky University, where his sons RP and Randy both attended. Russ’s wife, Pam, is an educator too, training teachers, students, and businesses to use energy more efficiently.

Russ met Ron at a communication conference in 1990, where they quickly discovered a shared interest in using feature films as a teaching tool. They have written and spoken extensively on this topic over the years, and they have also co-authored several textbooks and articles. When Russ isn’t teaching, writing, or presenting, his hobbies include sports (especially baseball), classic rock music (especially Steely Dan), and cooking (especially for family and friends on his birthday each year).





**HERE ARE THE TOPICS
DISCUSSED IN THIS
CHAPTER:**

> Why We Communicate

- Physical Needs
- Identity Needs
- Social Needs
- Practical Goals

**> The Process of
Communication**

- Linear View
- A Transactional View
- Interpersonal and
Impersonal Communication

**> Communication Principles
and Misconceptions**

- Communication Principles
- Communication
Misconceptions

**> What Makes an Effective
Communicator?**

- Communication Competence
Defined
- Characteristics of Competent
Communicators
- Competence in Intercultural
Communication

> Summary

> Key Terms

1

A FIRST LOOK AT INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

**AFTER STUDYING THE TOPICS IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU
SHOULD BE ABLE TO:**

- 1 Assess the needs (physical, identity, social, and practical) that communicators are attempting to satisfy in a given situation or relationship.
- 2 Apply the transactional communication model to a specific situation.
- 3 Describe how the communication principles and misconceptions identified in this chapter are evident in a specific situation.
- 4 Describe the degree to which communication (in a specific instance or a relationship) is qualitatively impersonal or interpersonal, and describe the consequences of this level of interaction.
- 5 Diagnose the effectiveness of various communication channels in a specific situation.
- 6 Determine the level of communication competence in a specific instance or a relationship.

MindTap READ AND UNDERSTAND ...

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Perhaps you played this game when you were younger. The group chooses a victim—either as punishment for committing a real or imagined offense or just for “fun.” Then for a period of time, that victim is given the silent treatment. No one speaks to him or her, and no one responds to anything the victim says or does.

If you were the subject of this silent treatment, you probably experienced a range of emotions. At first you might have felt—or at least acted—indifferent. But after a while, the strain of being treated as a nonperson probably began to grow. If the game went on long enough, it’s likely you found yourself either re-treating into a state of depression or lashing out with hostility—partly to show your anger and partly to get a response from the others.

Adults, as well as children, have used the silent treatment in virtually every society throughout history as a powerful tool to express displeasure and for social control.¹ We all know intuitively that communication—the company of others—is one of the most basic human needs, and that lack of contact is among the cruelest punishments a person can suffer. In fact, workplace studies show that employees would rather get negative attention from bosses and coworkers than receive no attention at all. It hurts to be picked on, but it’s worse to be ostracized.²

Besides being emotionally painful, being deprived of companionship is so serious that it can affect life itself. Frederick II, emperor of Germany in the 13th century, may have been the first person to prove the point systematically. A medieval historian described one of his significant, if inhumane, experiments:

He bade foster mothers and nurses to suckle the children, to bathe and wash them, but in no way to prattle with them, for he wanted to learn whether they would speak the Hebrew language, which was the oldest, or Greek, or Latin, or Arabic, or perhaps the language of their parents, of whom they had been born. But he labored in vain because all the children died. For they could not live without the petting and joyful faces and loving words of their foster mothers.³

Fortunately, contemporary researchers have found less barbaric ways to illustrate the importance of communication. In one study of isolation, subjects were paid to remain alone in a locked room. Of the five subjects, one lasted for eight days. Three held out for two days, one commenting, “Never again.” The fifth subject lasted only two hours.⁴

The need for contact and companionship is just as strong outside the laboratory, as individuals who have led solitary lives by choice or necessity have discovered. W. Carl Jackson, an adventurer who sailed across the Atlantic Ocean alone in fifty-one days, summarized the feelings common to most loners:

I found the loneliness of the second month almost excruciating. I always thought of myself as self-sufficient, but I found life without people had no meaning. I had a definite need for somebody to talk to, someone real, alive, and breathing.⁵



Vicky Kasala/Getty Images

WHY WE COMMUNICATE

You might object to stories like this, claiming that solitude would be a welcome relief from the irritations of everyday life. It's true that all of us need solitude, often more than we get, but each of us has a point beyond which we do not want to be alone. Beyond this point, solitude changes from a pleasurable to a painful condition. In other words, we all need relationships. We all need to communicate.

Physical Needs

Communication is so important that its presence or absence affects physical health. In extreme cases, communication can even become a matter of life or death. When he was a Navy pilot, U.S. Senator John McCain was shot down over North Vietnam and held as a prisoner of war for six years, often in solitary confinement. He and his fellow POWs set up clandestine codes in which they sent messages by tapping on walls to laboriously spell out words. McCain describes the importance of keeping contact and the risks that inmates would take to maintain contact with one another:

The punishment for communicating could be severe, and a few POWs, having been caught and beaten for their efforts, had their spirits broken as their bodies were battered. Terrified of a return trip to the punishment room, they would lie still in their cells when their comrades tried to tap them up on the wall. Very few would remain uncommunicative for long. To suffer all this alone was less tolerable than torture. Withdrawing in silence from the fellowship of other Americans... was to us the approach of death.⁶

Other prisoners have also described the punishing effects of social isolation. Reflecting on his seven years as a hostage in Lebanon, former news correspondent Terry Anderson said flatly, "I would rather have had the worst companion than no companion at all."⁷

The link between communication and physical well-being isn't restricted to prisoners. Medical researchers have identified a wide range of health threats that can result from a lack of close relationships. For instance:

- A meta-analysis of nearly 150 studies and over 300,000 participants found that socially connected people—those with strong networks of family and friends—live an average of 3.7 years longer than those who are socially isolated.⁸
- A lack of social relationships jeopardizes coronary health to a degree that rivals cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, blood lipids, obesity, and lack of physical activity.⁹
- Socially isolated people are four times more susceptible to the common cold than are those who have active social networks.¹⁰
- Divorced, separated, and widowed people are five to ten times more likely to need mental hospitalization than their married counterparts. Happily married people also have lower incidences of pneumonia, surgery, and cancer than do single people.¹¹ (It's important to note that the quality of the relationship is more important than the institution of marriage in these studies.)

By contrast, a life that includes positive relationships created through communication leads to better health. As little as ten minutes per day of socializing improves memory and boosts intellectual function.¹² Conversation with others reduces feelings of loneliness and its accompanying maladies.¹³ Stress hormones decline the more often people hear expressions of affection from loved ones.¹⁴

Research like this demonstrates the importance of having satisfying personal relationships. Not everyone needs the same amount of contact, and the quality of communication is almost certainly as significant as the quantity. The key point is that personal communication is essential for our well-being.

Identity Needs

Communication does more than enable us to survive. It is the way—indeed, the only way—we learn who we are. As Chapter 3 explains, our sense of identity comes from the way we interact with other people. Are we smart or stupid, attractive or plain, skillful or inept? The answers to these questions don't come from looking in the mirror. We decide who we are based on how others react to us.

Deprived of communication with others, we would have no sense of ourselves. A dramatic example is the “Wild Boy of Aveyron,” who spent his early childhood without any apparent human contact. The boy was discovered in January 1800 digging for vegetables in a French village garden. He showed no behaviors that one would expect in a social human. The boy could not speak but rather uttered only weird cries. More significant than this lack of social skills was his lack of any identity as a human being. As one author put it, “The boy had no human sense of being in the world. He had no sense of himself as a person related to other persons.”¹⁵ Only with the influence of a loving “mother” did the boy begin to behave—and, we can imagine, think of himself—as a human.

Like the boy of Aveyron, each of us enters the world with little or no sense of identity. We gain an idea of who we are from the way others define us. As Chapter 3 explains, the messages we receive in early childhood are the strongest, but the influence of others continues throughout life.

Social Needs

Besides helping to define who we are, communication provides a vital link with others. Researchers and theorists have identified a whole range of social needs that we satisfy by communicating. These include pleasure, affection, companionship, escape, relaxation, and control.¹⁶

Research suggests a strong link between effective interpersonal communication and happiness. In one study of more than 200 college students, the happiest 10 percent described themselves as having a rich social life. (The very happy people were no different from their classmates in any other measurable way such as amount of sleep, exercise, TV watching, religious activity, or alcohol consumption.)¹⁷ In another study, women reported that “socializing” contributed more to a satisfying life than virtually any other activity, including relaxing, shopping, eating, exercise, TV, or prayer.¹⁸ Married

couples who are effective communicators report happier relationships than less skillful husbands and wives—a finding that has been supported across cultures.¹⁹

Despite knowing that communication is vital to social satisfaction, a variety of evidence suggests that many people aren't very successful at managing their interpersonal relationships. For example, one study revealed that a quarter of the more than 4,000 adults surveyed knew more about their dogs than they did about their neighbors' backgrounds.²⁰ Research also suggests that the number of friendships is in decline. One widely recognized survey reported that, in 1985, Americans had an average of 2.94 close friends. Twenty years later, that number had dropped to 2.08.²¹ It's worth noting that educated Americans reported having larger and more diverse networks. In other words, a higher education can enhance your relational life as well as your intellect.

Because connections with others are so vital, some theorists maintain that positive relationships may be the single most important source of life satisfaction and emotional well-being in every culture.²² If you pause now and make a mental list of your own relationships, you'll probably see that, no matter how successfully you interact with friends, at home, at school, and at work, there is plenty of room for improvement in your everyday life. The information that follows will help you improve the way you communicate with the people who matter most to you.

Practical Goals

Besides satisfying social needs and shaping our identity, communication is the most widely used approach to satisfying what communication scholars call **instrumental goals**: getting others to behave in ways we want. Some instrumental goals are quite basic: Communication is the tool that lets you tell the hair stylist to take just a little off the sides, lets you negotiate household duties, and lets you convince the plumber that the broken pipe needs attention *now!*

Other instrumental goals are more important. Career success is the prime example. As the On the Job box in this section shows, communication skills are essential in virtually every career. They can even make the difference between life and death. The Los Angeles Police Department cited “bad communication” among the most common reasons for errors in shooting by its officers.²³ The ability to communicate effectively is just as essential for doctors, nurses, and other medical practitioners.²⁴ Researchers discovered that “poor communication” was the root of more than 60 percent of reported medical errors—including death, serious physical injury, and psychological trauma.²⁵ Research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and elsewhere revealed a significant difference between the communication skills of physicians who had no malpractice claims against them and those with previous claims.²⁶



▲ In his TV show *Louie*, comedian Louie CK is a relational pessimist who is chronically unlucky in love. Nonetheless he keeps trying because life without companionship is too lonesome to bear. How well does your communication fulfill your needs for connection? How can you use the information in this book to help you meet your social needs?

On The JOB

Communication and Career Success

No matter what the field, research confirms what experienced workers already know—that communication skills are crucial in finding and succeeding in a job. Communication skills often make the difference between being hired and being rejected. In one widely followed annual survey, employers list the skills and qualities for their ideal candidate. Communication skills always top the list, ahead of technical skills, initiative, analytical ability, and computer skills.^a

In another survey, managers across the country rated the abilities to speak and listen effectively as the two most important factors in helping college graduates find jobs in a competitive workplace—more important than technical competence, work experience, and specific degree earned.^b When 170 well-known business and industrial firms were asked to list the most

common reasons for *not* offering jobs to applicants, the most frequent replies were “inability to communicate” and “poor communication skills.”^c

Once you have been hired, the need for communication skills is important in virtually every career.^d Engineers spend the bulk of their working lives speaking and listening, mostly in one-to-one and small-group settings.^e Accountants and the firms that hire them consistently cite effective communication as essential for career success.^f One executive at computer giant Sun Microsystems made the point forcefully: “If there’s one skill that’s required for success in this industry, it’s communication skills.”^g Writing in *The Scientist*, a commentator echoed this sentiment: “If I give any advice, it is that you can never do enough training around your overall communication skills.”^h

Psychologist Abraham Maslow suggested that the physical, identity, social, and practical needs we have been discussing fall into five hierarchical categories, each of which must be satisfied before we concern ourselves with the less fundamental needs.²⁷ The most basic of these needs are *physical*: sufficient air, water, food, and rest, and the ability to reproduce as a species. The second of Maslow’s needs is *safety*: protection from threats to our well-being. Beyond physical and safety needs are the *social needs* we have mentioned already. Beyond these, Maslow suggests, each of us has *self-esteem* needs: the desire to believe that we are worthwhile, valuable people. The final category of needs described by Maslow is *self-actualization*: the desire to develop our potential to the maximum, to become the best person we can be. As you read on, think about the ways in which communication is often necessary to satisfy each level of need.

THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

We have been talking about *communication* as though the meaning of this word were perfectly clear. Communication scholars have argued for years about communication definitions. Despite their many disagreements, most would agree that, at its essence, communication is about using messages to generate meanings.²⁸ Notice how this basic definition holds true across a

variety of contexts—public speaking, small groups, mass media, etc. Before going further, we need to explain systematically what happens when people exchange messages and create meanings in interpersonal communication. Doing so will introduce you to a common working vocabulary and, at the same time, preview some of the topics that are covered in later chapters.

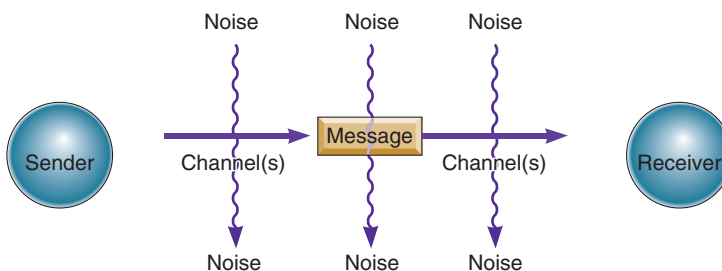
A Linear View

In the early days of studying communication as a social science, researchers created models to illustrate the communication process. Their first attempts resulted in a **linear communication model**, which depicts communication as something a sender “does to” a receiver. According to the linear model in Figure 1.1,

A **sender** (the person creating the message)
encodes (puts thoughts into symbols and gestures) a
message (the information being transmitted), sending it through a
channel (the medium through which the message passes) to a
receiver (the person attending to the message) who
decodes (makes sense of the message), while contending with
noise (distractions that disrupt transmission).

Notice how the appearance of and vocabulary in Figure 1.1 are similar to how radio and television broadcasting operate. This isn't a coincidence: The scientists who created it were primarily interested in early electronic media. The widespread use of this model has affected the way we think and talk about communication. There is a linear, machine-like quality to familiar phrases, such as “We're having a communication breakdown” and “I don't think my message is getting through.” While this is sometimes the case in mediated forms of communication, these familiar phrases (and the thinking they represent) obscure some important features of human communication. Does interpersonal communication really “break down,” or are people still exchanging information even when they're not talking to each other? Is it possible to “get a message through” to someone loudly and clearly, but still not get the desired reaction? Here are some other questions to consider about the shortcomings of the linear model:

- When you're having a face-to-face conversation with a friend, is there only one sender and one receiver, or do both of you send and receive messages simultaneously?



◀ **FIGURE 1.1**
 Linear Communication
 Model

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