

Student Perspectives of Instructional Modules to Improve College Students' Communication Skills

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Background

Students need ways to improve communication skills.

Providing opportunities for improvement is time-consuming for instructors.

Seven Instructional Modules:

Listening effectively

Communicating accurately and concisely

Communicating orally

Communicating pleasantly and professionally

Communicating in writing

Asking effective questions

Communicating appropriately and professionally using social media

Media Types

- PDF resources
 - Handouts
 - Worksheets
- In-module quiz questions
- Videos

The screenshot shows a dashboard for 'Module 1: Asking Effective Questions'. On the left, there is a sidebar with a 'Dashboard' icon and a list of items: 'MODULE OVERVIEW', 'ASKING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS: PART 1', 'ASKING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS: PART 2', and 'ASKING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS: PART 3'. The main content area displays 'Asking Effective Questions: Part 1' with a status of 'Unattempted'. A bold message states: 'This is a graded activity. Please complete this activity to receive your score.' Below this, a paragraph describes the module's content: 'This module will provide you an overview of how to ask effective questions. You will be provided two interactive, conceptual maps and two written scenarios. You must choose the questions you would ask. Your selection will lead you to an explanation of why the answer you chose was correct or incorrect. You will repeat this exercise until you have worked through the problem and found a solution. At the end, you will receive a summary of your answers and an overall evaluation of your questions. After identifying effective questions, you will create additional questions of fact, judgement, and preference.' At the bottom right, there are 'MENU' and 'BEGIN' buttons.

PDF Resources

Communicating Accurately and Concisely

The Paramedic Method

One resource that you can use to write

the Purdue OWL

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/paramedic_method.html

Communicating Accurately and Concisely

Check Your Knowledge: Critiquing Research Articles

Critiquing a research article begins by reading the article in its entirety. Then, reading it again, and analyzing it as you read it.

You can use "Guidelines for Critiquing a Research Report" (Conkin Dale, 2005; available in the Clipboard) and "Critiquing a paper: a guide" (Sbaih, 1999) to critique research articles and reports. Remember that the audiences for the articles you will be critiquing are likely scientists, which will mean these articles are typically written for a specialized audience rather than articles written for the general public.

Conkin Dale and Sbaih's articles focused on how to critique an article. Review the quiz questions on the next few pages.

Critiquing Research for Use in Practice
Susan Gordon EdM, PhD, RN, CNRN

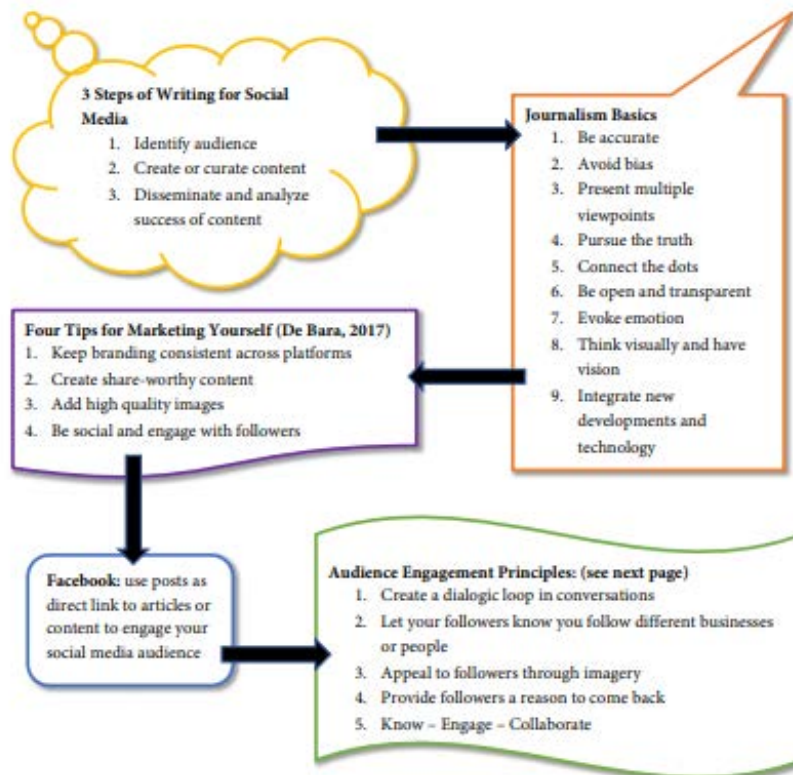
Critiquing a paper: a guide
L. Sbaih

Dale, J. (2005). Critiquing a research report for use in practice. *Journal of Health Care, 19*, 183-186.

Sbaih, L. (1999). Critiquing a paper: A guide. *Accident and Emergency Nursing, 7*, 31-33

MENU CONTINUE

Communicating in Writing: Social Media Tips & Tricks



Asking Effective Questions: 11 Types of Questions

These 11 types of questions were described by Paul and Elder (2012) and are based on their elements of reasoning and six intellectual standards.

Type of Question	Purpose of Question
Purpose	Define the task.
Information	Look at sources and quality of information.
Interpretation	Examine how you give meaning to information and challenge you to consider alternative ways to give information.
Assumption	Examine what you are taking for granted.
Implication	Follow how your thinking is directed or guided.
Point of View	Examine your point of view and consider the other's point of view considering your own.
Relevance	Differentiate what does and does not rely on the question.
Accuracy	Evaluate for truthfulness, facts, and clarity.
Precision	Be specific and focus on details.
Consistency	Think about the contradictions within your own thinking.
Logic	Think about how thought is constructed and examine if it is reasonable within context.

Communicating Appropriately and Professionally using Social Media

Check Your Knowledge: Worksheet 1

Using what you've learned so far, answer the question "What are five things 21st century agricultural consumers value?"

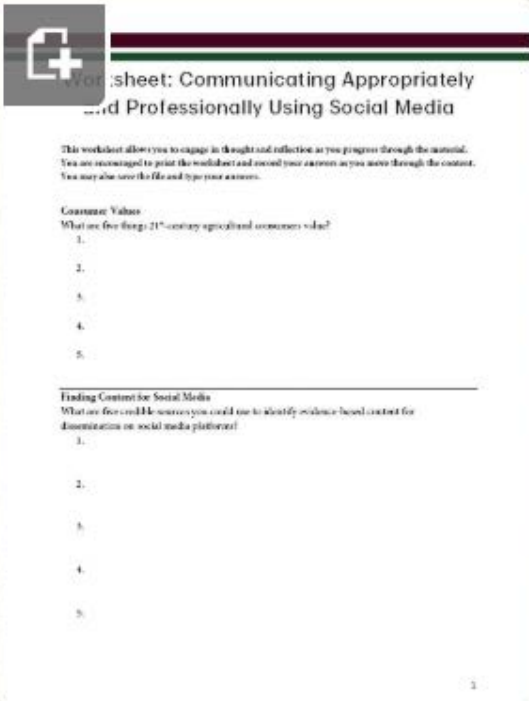
Record your answers in the "Worksheet 1: Consumer Values" section of your worksheet.

MENU

CONTINUE

Note: When you click on the file, you will need to download the file to your computer or print the file. Alternatively, you can right-click the handout on this page and choose "save as" or "print".

Submit the completed worksheet according to your instructor's guidelines.



The thumbnail shows a document titled "Worksheet: Communicating Appropriately and Professionally Using Social Media". It includes a section for "Consumer Values" with a question and five numbered lines for answers. Below that is a section for "Finding Content for Social Media" with a question and five numbered lines for answers. The page number "1" is visible in the bottom right corner of the document.

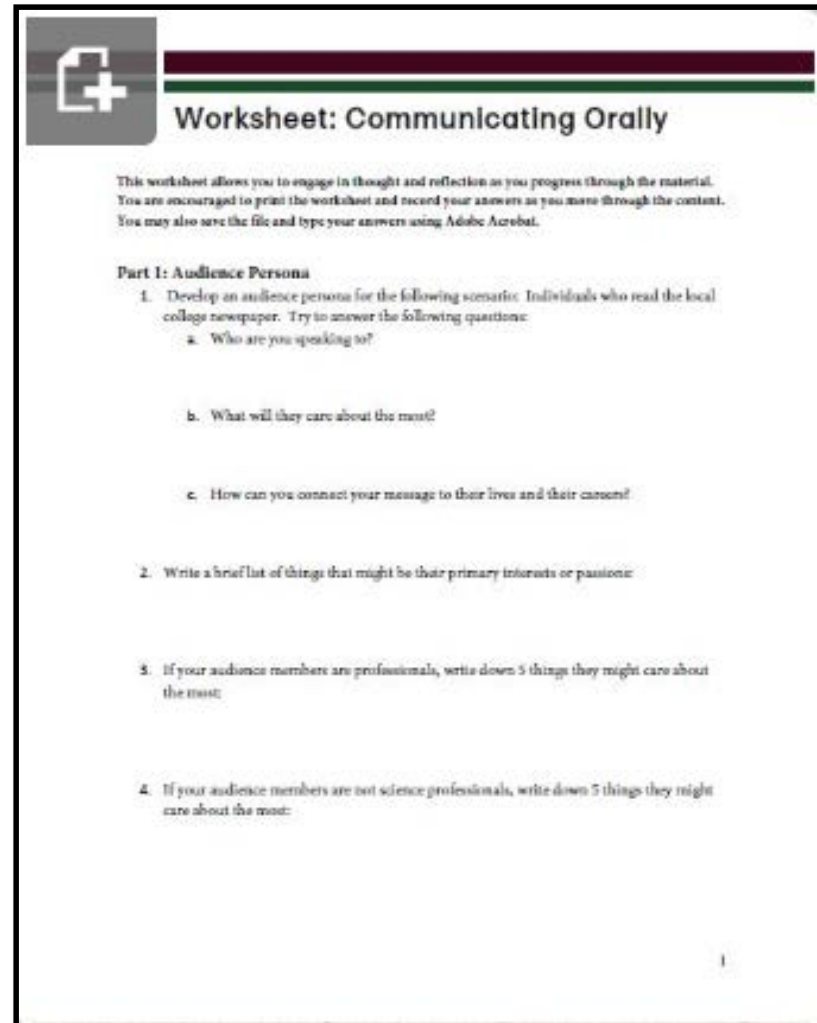
MENU

CONTINUE

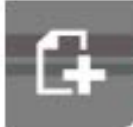


Worksheets:

- Print and write
- Save and type – then print



The worksheet features a header with a logo of a document and a plus sign, followed by the title "Worksheet: Communicating Orally". Below the title is an introductory paragraph explaining the purpose of the worksheet. The main content is divided into "Part I: Audience Persona" with four numbered tasks. The first task has three sub-questions (a, b, c) regarding audience identification and message connection. The second task asks for primary interests or passions. The third and fourth tasks ask for concerns of professionals and non-professionals, respectively. The page number "1" is located in the bottom right corner.

 **Worksheet: Communicating Orally**

This worksheet allows you to engage in thought and reflection as you progress through the material. You are encouraged to print the worksheet and record your answers as you move through the content. You may also save the file and type your answers using Adobe Acrobat.

Part I: Audience Persona

1. Develop an audience persona for the following scenario: Individuals who read the local college newspaper. Try to answer the following questions:
 - a. Who are you speaking to?
 - b. What will they care about the most?
 - c. How can you connect your message to their lives and their careers?
2. Write a brief list of things that might be their primary interests or passions:
3. If your audience members are professionals, write down 5 things they might care about the most:
4. If your audience members are not science professionals, write down 5 things they might care about the most:

1

Communicating Appropriately and Professionally using Social Media

Check Your Knowledge: Question 1

When communicating on social media, which of the following is **least** important to include?

Choose the best option:

Scientific facts

Transparency

Relevance

MENU

Communicating Appropriately and Professionally using Social Media

Check Your Knowledge: Question 1

 Incorrect

That's incorrect. The public's lack of experience with agriculture means that we need to honestly and openly show how food is produced.

MENU

CONTINUE

Communicating Appropriately and Professionally using Social Media



Four Steps to Communicate on Social Media

So, how do we communicate with relevance and to consumers' values on social media? By using four steps:

1. know the research,

2. know the audience,

3. make changes based on analytics, and

4. make digital media effective.

Watch **this short video** to learn about the four steps.



Module 4:

Communicating in Writing Part 3

COMMUNICATE
EDUCATE

MENU

CONTINUE

Grant Support

This project was supported by Higher Education Challenge Grant no. 2017-70003-26386 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.



Purpose

Engaging + Educational → Student
Feedback during Module Development



Methods

- 3 focus group sessions ($N = 62$)
 - $N_1 = 24$
 - $N_1 = 18$
 - $N_1 = 20$

- Students completed at least 1 module

Methods

Recap key components of module

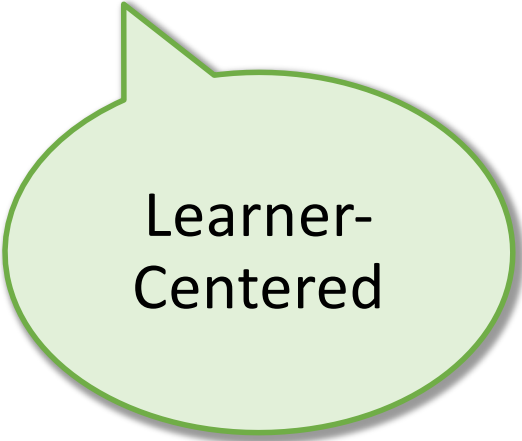
Guided session with following questions:

- Ease-of-use
- Aspects they liked or did not like
- Recommendations for improvement


Overall Results:



Hands-On



Learner-
Centered



Highly
Functional

Results: Ease of Use

- Able to follow instructor's directions to access and complete the module

“Easy to read format,
and the steps were
not overwhelming”

“Pretty easy to use”

“Scalable size...[was]
helpful for people...who
can't see very well”

Results: Ease of Use Suggestions

- Add progress bar/time stamp to show time remaining
- Clarify instructions for downloading/saving PDF worksheets
- Provide feedback to quiz question answers instead of allowing additional attempts and explain this process
- Explain how to resume module if needed
- Add ability to go backward and review content
- Expand directions for how to navigate around/through module

Results: Content Applicable to Other Work?

Content was more of a review/compliment to course

University Studies: content did not relate

Content and examples were good

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Content was more of a review/compliment to course

University Studies: content did not relate

Content and examples were good

- Link leadership components
- Link resources page for help with agricultural content

Results: What did you like?

- Fillable worksheets
- Hands-on practice

Results: What did you not like?

- Quiz questions need more feedback
- Need confirmation that module is complete
- Issues with PDF saving/downloading

Results: Improvements to Learning Experience?

- Provide incentives
- Instructors should provide more context before assigning to students
- Ensure modules are relevant to course
- Provide “Help” tab
- Update color scheme

Results

- **Highlights:** Fillable worksheets and formative quizzes were practical.

Modules were easy to use and benefitted their learning.

Student Recommendations

- Add clear and concise instructions for fillable PDF files
- Add FAQ tab to each section
- Provide stronger feedback after formative quizzes

Conclusion

Instructional modules beneficial if students engage.



Student-centered instruction will increase likelihood of engagement.

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