1. **The sender has an idea.**Whether a communication effort will ultimately be effective starts right here and depends on the nature of the idea and the motivation for sending it. For example, if your motivation is to offer a solution to a problem, you have a better chance of crafting a meaningful message than if your motivation is merely to complain about a problem.
2. **The sender encodes the idea as a message.**When someone puts an idea into a **message**, he or she is **encoding** it, or expressing it in words or images. Much of the focus of this course is on developing the skills needed to successfully encode your ideas into effective messages.
3. **The sender produces the message in a transmittable medium.**With the appropriate message to express an idea, the sender now needs a **communication medium** to present that message to the intended audience. To update your boss on the status of a project, for instance, you might have a dozen or more media choices, from a phone call to an instant message to a slideshow presentation.
4. **The sender transmits the message through a channel.**Just as technology continues to increase the number of media options, it also continues to provide new **communication channels** senders can use to transmit their messages. The distinction between medium and channel can get a bit murky, but think of the medium as the *form* a message takes (such as a Twitter update) and the channel as the system used to *deliver* the message (such as a mobile phone).
5. **The audience receives the message.**If the channel functions properly, the message reaches its intended audience. However, mere arrival is not enough. For a message to truly be received, the recipient has to *sense* the presence of a message, *select* it from all the other messages clamoring for attention, and *perceive* it as an actual message (as opposed to random noise).[**10**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323426340/epub/OPS/xhtml/fileP7000495272000000000000000001489.xhtml#P700049527200000000000000000149F)
6. **The receiver decodes the message.**After a message is received, the receiver needs to extract the idea from the message, a step known as **decoding**. Even well-crafted, well-intentioned communication efforts can fail at this stage because extracting meaning is a highly personal process that is influenced by culture, experience, learning and thinking styles, hopes, fears, and even temporary moods. As you saw in [**Figure 1.1**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323426340/epub/OPS/xhtml/fileP700049527200000000000000000107D.xhtml#P7000495272000000000000000001087), receivers sometimes decode the same meaning the recipient intended, but sometimes they can decode—or re-create—entirely different meanings. Moreover, audiences tend to extract the meaning they expect to get from a message, even if it’s the opposite of what the sender intended.[**11**](https://jigsaw.vitalsource.com/books/9781323426340/epub/OPS/xhtml/fileP7000495272000000000000000001489.xhtml#P70004952720000000000000000014A1)
7. **The receiver responds to the message.**In most instances, senders want to accomplish more than simply delivering information. They often want receivers to respond in particular ways, whether it’s to invest millions of dollars in a new business venture or to accept management’s explanation for why the company can’t afford to give employee bonuses this year. Whether a receiver responds as the sender hopes depends on the receiver (a) *remembering* the message long enough to act on it, (b) being *able* to act on it, and (c) being *motivated* to respond.
8. **The receiver provides feedback.**If a mechanism is available for them to do so, receivers can “close the loop” in the communication process by giving the sender **feedback** that helps the sender evaluate the effectiveness of the communication effort. Feedback can be verbal (using written or spoken words), nonverbal (using gestures, facial expressions, or other signals), or both. Just like the original message, however, this feedback from the receiver also needs to be decoded carefully. A smile, for example, can have many different meanings.

Considering the complexity of this process—and the barriers and distractions that often stand between sender and receiver—it should come as no surprise that communication efforts frequently fail to achieve the sender’s objective. Fortunately, the better you understand the process, the more successful you’ll be.