There are five steps in the communication process:

1. **Idea**
   
   The first step in the process is drawing a conclusion or formulating an idea to be presented. This can include simply planning to tell someone what you ate for breakfast, or planning to ask something big and important.

2. **Encoding**
   
   The second step of the process is the actual presentation. Some of the messages we wish to communicate take more effective planning time, while other messages can be “encoded” in just seconds. Encoding occurs when you choose how to phrase something.

3. **Channel**
   
   After encoding, we have to choose a format, or “channel,” to use to present our idea. Do you want to say it face-to-face, call on the phone, write a letter, or text it? Different messages and their importance and/or sensitivity can determine the medium we choose.

4. **Filter**
   
   Filters are the feelings or biases through which another person will interpret your message. You have to be careful with filters—you almost never know what filters another person may have! Sometimes they are easy guess: things like stress, hunger, or a good mood are pretty easy to detect. Try to be aware of both apparent and unapparent filters when presenting your ideas.

5. **Decoding**
   
   This is the final step, where the receiver of your idea interprets and “decodes” the information you gave them according to their filters. Just like in encoding, some messages can be processed much more rapidly than others. For more difficult or sensitive messages, this is the step where we fully comprehend meaning and emotion of messages (hopefully, the ones intended by the sender!).

Repeat.
### Listening Skills

Effective listening means listening with the intent to understand, not to simply respond. When listening to someone, try to be aware of and sensitive to their emotions, and allow what they are telling you to leave an impact on you. Use reflective listening: convey that you understand and empathize with that individual. In order to let the other person know that you are truly paying attention, here are some tips for reflective listening:

- **Comment**
- **Ask Questions**
- **Understand your own emotions**
- **Make personal connections**
- **Try to sense when to advise or respond**
- **Use silence when necessary**
- **Stay away from “bigger-better” comparisons**
- **Clarify**
- **Question**
- **Paraphrase**

### Speaking Skills

In can be hard to clearly communicate your feelings, and we all struggle at times to both send and receive effectively communicated messages. The most important aspect of speaking and communicating effectively in speech is honesty. When you're completely up-front about feelings and filters, there is a much lower chance of misinterpretation. Always clearly state your feelings or position when asked, and answer honestly. Here are some other tips:

- **Be clear about what you mean**
- **Do not fear others' reactions**
- **Use “I” messages**
- **Do not project your feelings on others**
- **Do not make assumptions for others in your speech**
- **Ensure that what you would say in person is the same as what you would say over text or email**
- **Be confident in your emotions**
- **Be sensitive**
- **Do not wait to say things out loud until the moment has passed**

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**Diagram:**

- **Distance:** Appropriate social distance is generally 1.5 to 3 feet away from another person.
- **Eye Contact:** Too much eye contact (a glare) is most often aggressive while too little eye contact (avoiding their gaze) is passive.
- **Posture:** Slouching can be seen as passive. Keeping your arms folded and turning away from a speaker is often seen as aggressive.
- **Facial Expressions:** Be aware of what your face is expressing and make sure that it is consistent with your words.
- **Voice:** Change pitch as you speak to convey feelings - a monotone can be perceived as either passive OR aggressive.
- **Dress:** If you look put together (no loose ends, hair neatly combed, etc.) you feel good and others perceive you as being more confident.
- **Nervous Habits:** Be aware of habits you may have that show your nervousness. These indicate that you are not confident.