Communication: Best Practice Cheat Sheet

Preferences

- Ask everyone how they **prefer to receive information** (e.g. verbally, in writing, as bullet points, audio)

- Make sure the person you are working with is **comfortable with and experienced at the software** you are using (e.g. Teams, Slack, WhatsApp)
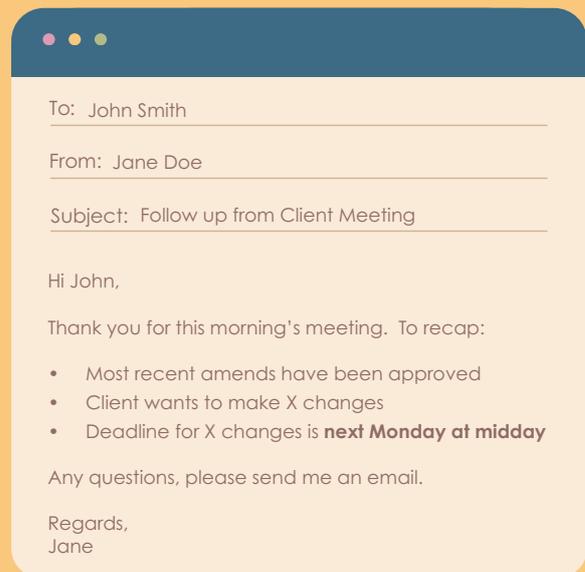
Presenting Information

General

- **Avoid jargon**, slang, subtext, acronyms, inferences, or idioms
- **Prioritise brevity** over complexity
- Make the main objectives **clear**

Email

- Make your email header reflect the content
- Write in digestible bullet point format for long bits of information
- Highlight any important timelines or details
- **Keep it brief**

To: John Smith

From: Jane Doe

Subject: Follow up from Client Meeting

Hi John,

Thank you for this morning's meeting. To recap:

- Most recent amends have been approved
- Client wants to make X changes
- Deadline for X changes is **next Monday at midday**

Any questions, please send me an email.

Regards,
Jane

Visual Materials

- Use a sans-serif font (a font without the small decorative 'feet' at the end of letters, like Calibri) minimum 12pt, with sufficient contrast between background and text

- AVOID USING ALL CAPS - it's much harder to read. Use sentence case instead

- Avoid using images directly behind text

- Bold key words rather than underline or italic

Instructions

Be clear and direct

- Use **straightforward language** – say "Do X" instead of "Would you like to…"
- Be **specific** and give examples of what you're asking for
- Outline **expectations** from the start

Slow down and check in

- **Don't rush** instructions – it increases confusion and stress
- **Pause** between key points, especially when giving verbal instructions
- **Follow up** with a written version so nothing gets missed
- **Check in** to make sure things have been understood – even if someone nods or says yes

Rethink Social Cues

- **Don't read too much i**nto silence, blank stares, or delayed responses
- Processing time varies – it's not disinterest or rudeness
- **Invite** clarifying questions without judgement

Deadlines

- **Be specific** with dates and timings when outlining when a project is due.
- **Avoid** ambiguous and loose-ended terms like 'ASAP' or 'when you get the chance', or any deadline that is open to interpretation.
- **Mnemonics** and **mind maps** can help people prioritise work and meet deadlines.
- **Deadline reminders** and check-ins can be useful.

**what the heck does 'ASAP' mean?!
Be clear in your deadlines!**

get this done ASAP

Change

When managing change, it helps to:

- **Communicate directly** with those affected, rather than relying on second-hand updates.

- **Explain the reason** behind the change and involve your team in understanding what it means for them.

- **Be honest** if you don't have all the answers yet, share what you can and keep people updated as things develop.

- **Check in regularly** to see how people are adjusting and if further support is needed.

- **Clearly outline** what the change will mean in practice, such as how it will affect tasks, timelines, or the working environment, so that expectations are clear.

Feedback

When giving feedback, it can help to:

- Ask how the individual **prefers** to receive feedback. Some may find written notes easier to process, while others may prefer a conversation.

- **Balance** praise with areas for improvement to keep feedback constructive and encouraging.

- Be aware that some people may experience strong emotional responses (such as denial or withdrawal) due to Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria; **stay supportive** and, if needed, offer a follow-up when emotions have settled.

- Offer feedback **regularly**, rather than saving it all for formal reviews, this helps keep discussions manageable and avoids overwhelming the person.

- Be **clear** and **direct**; not everyone picks up on implied meaning or indirect critique.

- If the conversation feels difficult in the moment, suggest a **short break** or offer a follow-up session to revisit the feedback after they've had time to reflect.