



## 6 Tools Master Communicators Use

Master Communicators are certainly savvy at connecting with people. You know it almost as soon as you meet them — there's a virtual immediate click. Here's what they know to do:

1. **Avoid Defensiveness.** They avoid defensiveness as much as possible; they know it's damaging to relationships. They strive to avoid causing others to feel defensive. They avoid creating one-up one-down situations. And they try to avoid feeling defensive themselves; try to focus on remaining objective in difficult situations. They know this helps quell defensiveness in everyone.
2. **Appreciate Perception.** They leave room in their interactions for different opinions and perspectives; they know each person perceives things differently. We may think we're seeing the same thing; in actuality, our brains see it in our own unique way. Master communicators keep this in mind especially when they disagree. They respect that the other person may not be stupid or crazy — just that they see it differently. They know it's incredibly useful to simply ask you how you see it. Master communicators learn a lot. And when they disagree, often start with something like, *"I see it differently. The way I see it..."*

3. **Listen.** They choose the mode of listening that's appropriate to the situation. They know when to listen truly, fully; they know when to offer builds; they know when to just soak it in. They keep their focus on what's being said instead of mentally preparing their response. They don't engage that part of their brain that wants to counter what they're hearing, or find the flaw, or ready a list of responses. Master communicators know how to really listen. I guarantee they learn more.

4. **Paraphrase.** When it's appropriate, master communicators paraphrase in their own words what they heard the person say. Important: They remember to ask if they got it right so someone can clarify any missed bits. A good paraphrase goes like this: *"What I heard you say was XXX. Is that right?"*

5. **Assume positive intent.** They infer the positive intent behind what someone's saying. This is difficult to do when they're feeling the emotional smack of a put-down. But Master communicators realize that few people intend to discount; it just happens (perception, remember?). So they pause for a moment and consider the positive intent. A couple of examples: *"She wants this to move forward so she wants us to stay under the budget,"* instead of, *"There she goes again! It's always about the money with her,"* or *"He's concerned about management understanding this so we can get approval,"* instead of, *"He's such a suck up with management."*

6. **Questions.** They ask questions to learn more about you; they take the time to understand where you are coming from, your perspectives. Master communicators use questions that cause you to think, to reflect, for a moment. So you don't just react, but you enjoy interacting.

Master Communicators are interesting people to be around; they have a lot to offer; you look forward to getting to know them; you enjoy being with them.