

# Preface

## Welcome to the Thirteenth Edition of *InterAct!*

### To Students Who Are About to Use This Text:

Few courses you take in college can have as profound an impact on your life as a course in interpersonal communication. You are embarking on a course of study that will help you be a better friend, family member, lover, partner, employee, manager, coworker, and leader. *Inter-Act* does this by empowering you with specific skills that can be used to improve communication and relationships with other people. Each chapter explores concepts and valid theories that explain how interpersonal communication processes work to define, develop, and sustain relationships. You will also be encouraged to practice, refine, and adopt specific interpersonal communication skills that can increase your interpersonal competence and ability to form healthy relationships. These skills cover the whole spectrum of human interaction, from developing messages to communicate your meaning, understanding the nonverbal behavior of others, listening effectively, managing conversations with strangers and acquaintances, providing support and comfort to others, maintaining your privacy, dealing with conflict, and simply finding the most effective way to speak up for yourself. You will also practice more complex skills to develop and sustain intimate relationships with family members, close friends, intimate partners, and people in your workplace. You will learn how cultural practices influence the effectiveness of communication. Finally you will study how practices in digital communication and social networking affect our relationships and learn techniques that can help you be effective as you “talk” with others via technology.

### Goals of *Inter-Act*

As with previous editions, *Inter-Act*, thirteenth edition, meets six specific goals that are essential to a basic course in interpersonal communication.

1. Explain important communication concepts, frameworks, and theories that have been consistently supported by careful research so that you can understand the conceptual foundations of interpersonal communication.
2. Teach specific communication skills that research has shown facilitate effective relationships.
3. Present ethical frameworks you can use to be a moral communicator in your relationships.

4. Sensitize you as to how communication needs, rules, and processes differ among diverse people.
5. Challenge you to think critically and creatively about the concepts and skills you learn.
6. Provide abundant skills and practice activities that significantly enhance your learning.

### To Instructors Who Have Selected This Text:

The skills-based approach that has made *Inter-Act* so popular over the years has been significantly expanded and reinforced with this new edition. Many of these changes are based on our desire to ground the book squarely within the message-centered approach to interpersonal communication (see Burleson, 2010). A message-centered approach allows us to explore how people form relationships and applies current theories and concepts as a framework for understanding interpersonal communication. The message-centered approach is consistent with the premise that there are basic universal message skills and guidelines that improve the likelihood of successful human interaction. *Inter-Act* has always taken a skills-based approach to teaching interpersonal communication. This edition introduces the concepts of canned plans and communication scripts as a way of understanding the mental processes involved in message preparation. Understanding these processes enables students to incorporate new skills into their behavioral repertoire and improve relationships. With this overview in mind, let's take a closer look at what is new in this edition.

### New to This Edition

- **Emphasis on Social Media.** The book has been strengthened by expanded discussions of social media and its associated theories, skills, and applications in the realm of interpersonal communication. Ten chapters include new sections called The Social Media Factor that discuss the latest theories, practices, and guidelines for using social media within the context of each chapter. Every chapter includes new marginal activities called Inter-Act with Social Media. Many chapters are further enhanced by the addition of new summary questions and review activities specifically related to digital communication. This balanced approach to the topic was designed to complement the book's existing emphasis on understanding, developing, and using interpersonal communication skills.
- **Updated discussions on theories and concepts.** A key goal for this edition was to reflect changes to interpersonal concepts found in contemporary research. This is evidenced by many new discussions in the body of the text. Examples include an emphasis on a message-centered approach (Chapter 1), the dual processes of social perception (Chapter 2), intercultural communication competence (Chapter 3), the instrumental, constitutive, and indexical functions of communications

in relationships (Chapter 6), personal and cultural differences in listening (Chapter 7), new guidelines for improving conversational skills (Chapter 8), new suggestions for improving one's ability to empathize (Chapter 9), discussion of how to effectively ask for feedback (Chapter 10), the use of power to influence others (Chapter 11), face-to-face conflict management versus the use of digital communications (Chapter 12), new and expanded discussions of managing destructive conflict patterns and forgiveness (Chapter 12), skill clusters that are important to sustaining communications in friendships (Chapter 13), guidelines for maintaining a positive climate in intimate relationships (Chapter 13), and new discussions on hiring practices and co-worker relationships (Chapter 14).

- **Expanded suite of Skill Practice activities.** Skill Practice exercises at the end of every chapter reinforce *Inter-Act's* stature as a highly skills-based text. Dozens of new exercises have been added to this edition, providing the student with one or more activities for every skill discussed in the text.
- **Chapter 3, “Intercultural Communication.”** This has been moved forward in response to instructor feedback, re-titled from the last edition, and revised to discuss the relationships between concepts.
- **Chapter 7, “Listening Effectively.”** This has been moved forward in response to instructor feedback and now is placed before the chapter on conversation.

## Hallmark Features of *Inter-Act*— Strengthened and Revised

- **Chapter openers.** Each chapter opens with a practical set of goals for the student and a sample conversation to set the scene for key ideas to be discussed. These fictional opening conversations have been reconceived for this edition and rewritten for all of the chapters. The conversations revolve around a recurring set of college-age students. What unifies this diverse group is that they are all taking the same interpersonal communication course.
- **Running chapter features.** Each chapter includes several unobtrusive features that reinforce learning by engaging the student. *Key Terms* and definitions are highlighted in the margins. *Observe and Analyze* activities ask students to observe common communication situations and analyze them using the concepts and theories that have just been presented in the text. New *Inter-Act with Social Media* activities direct students to think about how basic interpersonal processes are affected when we use social or electronic media. Instructors can assign these activities as graded exercises or as prompts for journal entries.
- **Chapter Box features.** A variety of special boxes highlight other perspectives on interpersonal communication. *Diverse Voices* include

excerpts of previously published articles that shed light on the communication experiences of people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. *A Question of Ethics: What Would You Do?* is a box that outlines ethical challenges and requires students to think critically about a variety of ethical dilemmas faced by communicators. Each of these kinds of boxes now features a set of critical thinking questions to help the student apply what they've read. Many chapters feature a self-administered poll called *Learn About Yourself*, an opportunity for the student to assess their own communication skills within the context of the chapter. Instructors may choose to assign these optional boxes for extra credit or use them to launch class discussion.

- **Spotlight on Scholars.** Once a box in the chapters, *Spotlight on Scholars* has been updated and moved to the book's companion Web site. These short essays highlight the interested work of leading scholars in the field. These are of particular interest to individuals who are considering a career in communication research. The student is reminded of these Web entries by a marginal note in associated chapters.
- **Skill Builders.** These entries, found in the many chapters, underscore the skills-based emphasis of *Inter-Act*. Each *Skill Builders* entry highlights a specific definition of a skill, provides a brief description of its use, explains the steps for enacting the skill, and includes an example to illustrate its use.
- **Inter-Action Dialogues and Analyses.** Found at the conclusion of Chapters 7 through 12, *Inter-Action Dialogues and Analyses* are a special interactive feature with a video component. Each chapter features a dialogue to illustrate specific skills presented in the chapter. Transcriptions of the conversations are printed in the chapter. The book's companion Web site, at [www.oup.com/us/verderber](http://www.oup.com/us/verderber), includes the associated video footage of the conversations as well as a worksheet for the student to record their analysis. One of the analyses is provided on the Web site. The resulting worksheet may be e-mailed to the instructor for assessment. These conversations can be used for class discussion or as analytical assignments.
- **End-of-chapter resources.** These begin with a Summary of key takeaway concepts from the chapter and bullet points indicating what the student should be able to *explain* and *do* after reading the chapter. A list of *Key Words* and page numbers enables the student to quickly scan the chapter for key concepts. This is followed by two sets of activities. Apply Your Knowledge includes activities that challenge students to apply the concepts, theories, and skills that they have used to understand or improve a communication situation. As part of this, Chapters 7–12 each include the transcript of an *Interaction Dialogue* that students can use to identify and diagnose what is happening in a conversation. At the book's companion website, at [www.oup.com/us/verderber](http://www.oup.com/us/verderber), students will find an associated video clip of the conversations as well as a worksheet

they can use to record their analysis. The resulting worksheet may be emailed to the instructor for assessment or these activities may be assigned as homework and used as the basis for class discussion. At the website students will also find an example of completed analysis. Skill Practice activities are short drills that students may complete as they work to increase their ability to use the specific communication skills presented in the chapter. There is one of these activities for every skill discussed in the text. These may be assigned as written activities or used as part of in-class practice. A Communication Improvement Plan for each chapter helps students set a goal for improving some aspect of their communication. The companion website includes a handy form that can be downloaded to record a plan. Inter-Act with Media provides additional reinforcement for chapter concepts by using television programs and movies as content-related examples. Instructors might assign one of these to the class and use it as the basis for a class discussion or assessment activity.

- **Skill Builders Chart.** As an additional convenience for the reader, we provide a tear-out chart at the beginning of the book including all of the book's *Skill Builders* entries.

## Significant Content Updates

In addition to new and enhanced features, every chapter has been revised to reflect current theory, scholarship, and ways that social and technological change are affecting our communication and relationships.

**Chapter 1: “An Orientation to Interpersonal Communication,”** has been reorganized and significantly revised to reflect a message-centered philosophy of interpersonal communication. The chapter begins by defining interpersonal communication and uses the parts of that definition as the framework for organizing the chapter. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Understanding Social Media and Interpersonal Communication. New figures include Figure 1.1, A Model of Communication Between Two Individuals, Figure 1.2, Understanding Dark Side Messages, Figure 1.5, The Evolution of Social Networking Technology, and Figure 1.6, A Continuum of Media Richness.

**Chapter 2: “Forming and Using Social Perception,”** has been streamlined and reorganized into three main points: The Perception Process, Perceiving Others, and Self-Perception: Self-Concept and Self-Esteem. Information on self-presentation has been moved to Chapter 8 “Holding Effective Conversations.” The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Human Factors in Using Social Media.

**Chapter 3: “Intercultural Communication,”** has been moved forward, re-titled from the previous edition, and has been revised to clarify the relationships between concepts. A new section on intercultural

communication competence has been added. The chapter includes the new Figure 3.2, The Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence.

**Chapter 4: “Verbal Messages,”** is major revision. This chapter introduces students to linguistics and the different ways the verbal parts of messages may be effective or ineffective. The chapter includes new and revised figures for Figure 4.1, Improving Message Semantics through Clear and Specific Language, Figure 4.2, Improving Semantic Accuracy by Dating Messages, and Figure 4.3, Improving Semantic Accuracy by Indexing Messages.

**Chapter 5: “Nonverbal Messages,”** has been revised and updated to reflect new scholarship.

**Chapter 6: “Communication in the Life-Cycle of Relationships,”** has a new title that reflects the major revisions to what was previously Chapter 3. The chapter begins with a new discussion of how communication functions in a relationship: instrumental, constitutive, and indexical. Next the types of relationships are described, categorized, and the dimensions of relationships are discussed. The life cycle of relationships is explained beginning with a discussion on how relationships changes happen: incrementally and suddenly. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Social Media and Relationship Closeness.

**Chapter 7: “Listening Effectively,”** has been moved forward and is placed before the chapter on conversation. The chapter begins with a discussion of the dual approaches that we take when listening: reflexive or active listening. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Digital Listening Skills.

**Chapter 8: “Holding Effective Conversations,”** has been substantially revised. The chapter begins with an overview of conversations including a definition, discussion of the characteristics of a conversation, and description of the types of conversations. Much of the chapter focuses on specific guidelines that can improve our general conversational skills. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Digital Conversation Skills. There is a new Figure 8.1, Twenty-Nine Types of Conversation.

**Chapter 9: “Supporting Others,”** has been updated and undergone some organizational changes. Added to the discussion of empathy are specific guidelines for improving our ability to empathize. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Using Social Media to Offer Empathy and Support. There is a new Figure 9.1, Types of Social Support Messages.

**Chapter 10: “Communicating Personal Information: Disclosure and Privacy,”** has been updated and the section on Asking for Feedback has been substantially revised. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Digitally Managing Your Personal Information. There

is a new Figure 10.1, Risk and Benefits of Disclosure and Maintaining Privacy.

**Chapter 11: “Using Interpersonal Influence,”** has been substantially revised. The discussion of power now includes references to how we can use each source of power directly or indirectly as we seek to influence others. The discussion of interpersonal influence begins by using the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion to explain that we can process influence attempts automatically or consciously. We then discuss the heuristics (compliance gaining strategies) in messages that appeal to automatic processors and the ways that extensive processors evaluate persuasive messages (quality of the reasoning, credibility of the speaker, and appropriateness of emotional appeals). The section on Assertiveness has been substantially revised.

**Chapter 12: “Managing Conflict,”** has been revised to highlight different cultural approaches to disagreement. A new discussion addresses the role that face negotiation plays in conflict including cultural differences in the meaning of face and uses face negotiation theory to explain how culture and co-culture influence our personal conflict style preferences. New guidelines are provided for breaking destructive conflict patterns, and an expanded section on forgiveness offers specific guidelines and skills that can help repair the damage done to a relationship. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Managing the Dark Side of Digital Communication.

**Chapter 13: “Communicating in Intimate Relationships,”** has been refocused to emphasize how communication patterns and skills affect intimate relationships. The chapter concludes with new material on the “dark side” of intimacy (relational uncertainty and possessiveness) and presents how effective communication can overcome these dark side tendencies. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Using Digital Communication Skills to Improve Relationships. There is a revised Figure 13.1, Common Family Structures.

**Chapter 14: “Communicating in the Workplace,”** has been revised with new discussions. The section on the hiring process has been updated to reflect current practice that uses online job postings, company research, and application processes. The section on co-worker relationship has new content on the types of co-worker relationships and the communication patterns in each type. The chapter concludes with new material on the “dark side” of workplace relationships including aggression and sexual harassment. The chapter includes a new **Social Media Factor** section: Digital Communication Skills in Professional Relationships. New and revised figures for Figure 14.1, Sample Chronological Resume, Figure 14.2, Sample Functional Résumé, Figure 14.3, Sample Cover Letter E-mail, and Figure 14.4, Commonly Asked Interview Questions.

## Supplementary Materials

As a reader of this text, you also have access to supplementary materials for both student and faculty.

### Student Materials

- The *Student Success Manual*, written by Leah Bryant of DePaul University, is a printed supplement that will help students master the course material. It features study tips, chapter outlines and summaries, review questions and answers, key terms, and critical thinking exercises. The companion Web site, [www.oup.com/us/verderber](http://www.oup.com/us/verderber), offers a wealth of resources for both students and instructors, including online self-testing and other study aids, links to a variety of communication-related Web sites, and “Now Playing,” reviews of recent films (see print version below).
- *Now Playing: Learning Communication through Film*, available as an optional printed product, looks at more than 60 contemporary and classic feature films through the lens of communication principles. Developed by Russell F. Proctor II and revised by Darin Garard of Santa Barbara City College, *Now Playing* illustrates a variety of both individual scenes and full-length films, highlighting concepts and offering discussion questions for a mass medium that is interactive, familiar, and easily accessible.

### Faculty Materials

- The *Instructor’s Manual* is available in print and is also included on the accompanying *Instructor’s Resource CD* provided to adopters of the text. Revised by Jennifer Pitts of Volunteer State Community College, it provides teaching tips, exercises, and test questions that will prove useful to both new and veteran instructors. The *Instructor’s Manual* includes pedagogical suggestions, sample syllabi, content outlines, discussion questions, chapter activities, simulations, and journal assignments. The comprehensive Test Bank offers approximately 400 exam questions in multiple-choice, true/false, and essay formats.
- The *Instructor’s Resource CD with Computerized Test Bank*, available to adopters, includes an electronic copy of the *Instructor’s Manual*, a computerized test bank, and newly revised PowerPoint®-based lecture slides by Jennifer Pitts of Volunteer State Community College.
- The Instructor’s Companion Website at [www.oup.com/us/verderber](http://www.oup.com/us/verderber) is a password-protected site featuring the *Instructor’s Manual*, PowerPoint®-based lecture slides, and links to supplemental materials and films.
- *Now Playing: Instructor’s Edition*, an instructor-only print supplement, includes an introduction on how to incorporate film examples in class, more sample responses to the numerous discussion questions in the student edition of *Now Playing*, viewing guides, additional films, and references.



- Course cartridges for a variety of e-learning environments allow instructors to create their own course Web sites with the interactive material from the instructor and student companion Web sites. Contact your Oxford University Press representative for access.

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*Kathleen S. Verderber*