

# Golden Rules of Communication

A man and wife were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. Think about it – 50 years of married life!

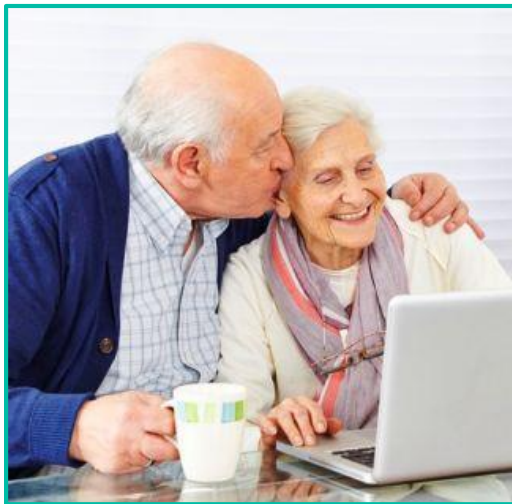
Having spent most of the day with relatives and friends at a big party given in their honor, they were back home again. They decided, before retiring, to have a little snack of tea with bread and butter.

They went into the kitchen, where the husband opened a new loaf of bread and handed the end piece (the heel) to his wife.

Whereupon, she exploded! She said: “For 50 years you have been dumping the heel of the bread on me. I will not take it anymore – this lack of concern for me and what I like.”

On and on she went, in the bitterest of terms for offering her the heel of the bread. The husband was absolutely astonished at her tirade.

When she had finished, he said to her quietly: “But it’s my favorite piece.”



This story is one of love and consideration of the husband for the wife when it came to sharing the bread. But it is also one of colossal failure to communicate. Communication, as you know, is vital for any relationship – in marriage, in business, in friendships, in church affiliations, etc.

Recently, I discovered an article from *Psychology Today* written by Dr. Neel Burton, a psychiatrist, philosopher and writer who lives and teaches in Oxford, England. He identifies 10 golden rules of communication. Today, we will examine the five rules of good listening; tomorrow, the five rules of good talking. But first, the rules of listening:

1. **Be warm and attentive.** People have an instinctive feel for who wants to listen and who doesn't. Unfortunately, most people don't really talk *to* but *at* each other.
2. **Show that you are listening.** Communication is a dynamic, interactive process. Unless you show that you are listening, people will lose confidence in whatever it is they are saying, think you're not interested and grind to a halt.
3. **Demonstrate understanding, that you are on the same wave length,** that you are really “getting” what is being said and even, often, what is not being said.
4. **Be slow to pass judgment.** The best way to stop someone from self-disclosing is to be, or even just appear to be, passing judgment over them.

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5. **Use silence appropriately.**

Conversations that don't use silence are hard work, and endless drivel is not always the best response. Some things are so subtle or important or shocking that the most appropriate response can only be an appreciative or understanding silence. Silence also shows acceptance and creates intimacy.



There is much value in being a good listener. The Bible agrees:

*Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future*  
(Proverbs 19:20 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter