

Good communication is vital to keeping your relationships healthy. However, bad communication habits—like avoiding discussing difficult subjects—are easy to fall into. This assessment will help you determine how well you are communicating with your partner. If you aren't currently in an intimate relationship, take this assessment with a close friendship in mind. Communication is important in all relationships—intimate or not.

Read each question and choose the response that reflects how you think or respond the majority of the time. Think about what you actually do or believe as opposed to what you “know” you should do or believe.

1. Do you believe that disagreements or arguments are
 - a. harmful and negative for a relationship or
 - b. helpful and positive for a relationship
2. Do you believe that your partner should
 - a. know what you are thinking and feeling or
 - b. hear what you are thinking and feeling
3. Do you
 - a. drop hints about your concerns in the relationship or
 - b. get right to the point when discussing a concern in the relationship
4. Do you tell your partner
 - a. what you don't like about him or her and your relationship or
 - b. what you like about him or her and your relationship
5. Do you
 - a. withdraw from a conflict or conversation with your partner or
 - b. stay around until there is a resolution of the conflict or conversation
6. Do you
 - a. hint at what you want or don't want from your partner or
 - b. state clearly what you want and don't want
7. Do you
 - a. interrupt your partner's conversation or
 - b. wait until your partner has finished stating his or her thoughts and ideas
8. Do you
 - a. blame your partner or others for your relationship problems or
 - b. acknowledge and accept your part in your relationship problems
9. Were your parents
 - a. poor communicators or
 - b. good communicators

Source: Martin, Steven and Martin, Catherine. Communication Assessment. How Well Do You Communicate? Nine Questions and Analysis. Copyright ©2017 by The Positive Way, from www.positive-way.com/communication.htm. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

SCORING

The answer “b” to all questions indicates more effective communication. The more “b’s” you have, the better you’re doing. The “a’s” indicate an opportunity to improve.

Here is why “b” is the better answer for each question:

1. Intimacy and conflict go hand in hand. If you want real intimacy with your mate, then there will be real conflict. People just don't agree on everything at all times. How you handle the resulting disagreements is more important than whether or not you have them. The most successful couples work through their disagreements and conflicts together and develop a stronger relationship as a result of that teamwork.
2. No one is a mind reader, and it is really impossible for your partner to know what you are thinking and feeling no matter how long you have known each other. It is important that you agree to *say* what is important and to *talk* until you both agree that you *understand*.
3. Dropping hints wastes your time and your partner's time, and it usually leads to misunderstanding and disappointment. Get right to the point so that your partner won't have to guess what your concerns are in the relationship. State how you feel by using “I” statements instead of “you” statements.
4. Concentrating on what you like about your mate and your relationship will lead to a more positive relationship. If you concentrate on the things you don't like, it's easy to

overlook the good things. Negativity breeds negativity, which then makes communication and problem solving more difficult. Use positive elements of the relationship as a foundation upon which to learn and grow.

5. Communication requires two people. Issues will remain unsettled unless you and your partner agree to communicate. We recommend that you agree to communicate with the guidelines of *understanding*, *kindness*, *honesty*, and *respect* as ground rules. These guidelines will serve to reduce tension and remind you both that you are on the same team. As a couple, agree to your own discussion rules, which can include such things as *time-outs* for cooling off or thinking.
6. Most of us don't pick up on hints, so don't expect your partner to guess what you do or don't want. Make clear and direct statements. Follow the guidelines of *understanding*, *kindness*, *honesty*, and *respect*. These guidelines make it easier to state your desires in a positive way and are more likely to be understood and well received.
7. Successful communication requires good listening. No one wants to be interrupted while speaking. We all want our feelings and thoughts to be heard, valued, and understood. Listen for understanding. Rephrase what you have heard your partner say, and then ask if this is correct. Save your side of the discussion until you have validated your partner's feelings. Validating your partner's feelings and thoughts is the key to success.
8. Blame fuels the fire of disagreement. Most of the time we believe that our position is acceptable and tend to blame the other person for any misunderstanding rather than seeing our own flaws in communicating. Analyze your part in fueling a problem, and avoid blaming others. Be responsible for your role in the relationship.
9. We tend to learn by example. If your parents were poor communicators, more than likely you have learned and now act out some ineffective ways of communicating. These habits may seem quite comfortable to you even if they are not working. It is up to you to learn new positive ways to communicate. Be persistent and practice until they become habit.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. How did you do on the assessment? Discuss your strengths and any areas for improvement.
2. Think more about your parents' communication. Why did you respond the way you did to question 9? How did they handle conflict? Do you see yourself following any of their habits, good or bad?