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TOPICALLY ARRANGED

**Updated With
December 2025
Past Paper with Answers**

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TOPIC 4

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

QUESTION 1

December 2025 Question Seven C

Describe **FOUR** ways in which non-verbal communication could undermine verbal communication. (10 marks)

QUESTION 2

April 2025 Question Five B

Explain **FIVE** roles of non-verbal cues in communication. (5 marks)

QUESTION 3

December 2024 Question Six A

Describe **FIVE** types of gestures used in communication. (10 marks)

QUESTION 4

August 2024 Question Three B

Explain **FIVE** ways in which body language impacts on communication. (5 marks)

QUESTION 5

April 2024 Question Six C

Discuss **FOUR** circumstances under which it might be appropriate to use non-verbal communication. (8 marks)

QUESTION 6

December 2023 Question Six B

Discuss **FIVE** guidelines that can be used to improve the understanding and interpretation of non-verbal communication. (10 marks)

QUESTION 7

August 2023 Question Six A

Outline **FOUR** strategies that could be used to improve non-verbal communication. (4 marks)

QUESTION 8

April 2023 Question Five B

With relevant examples, discuss **FOUR** ways in which non-verbal communication could reinforce verbal communication. (8 marks)

PART B

SUGGESTED ANSWERS FOR PAST PAPERS EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

TOPIC 4

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

QUESTION 1

December 2025 Question Seven C

Ways in which non-verbal communication could undermine verbal communication.

- **Contradicting the verbal message:** This is the most direct way non-verbal cues can cause conflict. For instance, a person verbally stating, "I'm not upset," while simultaneously clenching their jaw, narrowing their eyes, and using a sharp tone of voice, will have their non-verbal anger perceived as the truth over their spoken words.
- **Diverting attention:** Excessive, distracting non-verbal behaviors can make it difficult for a listener to focus on what is being said. Fidgeting, avoiding eye contact, or shifting posture erratically can cause the listener to concentrate more on the speaker's nervousness or discomfort than on the actual content of the conversation.
- **Conveying negative emotions:** Non-verbal cues often reveal underlying attitudes or emotions that the speaker is trying to conceal verbally. A sarcastic tone, a dismissive hand gesture, or a general lack of enthusiasm (flat affect) can communicate disinterest or contempt, overriding positive or neutral words.
- **Creating a lack of credibility:** When non-verbal signals do not match verbal statements, the speaker appears untrustworthy. A common example is someone speaking confidently about a topic while sweating profusely and stumbling over words, which suggests a lack of confidence or even deceit, undermining their expert claims.
- **Sending mixed signals (ambiguity):** Incongruence creates confusion and ambiguity. The listener is forced to interpret which message is the intended one. For example, a manager who says "My door is always open if you need help" but crosses their arms, frowns, and looks at their watch during the conversation is sending mixed signals that make it unclear if they are truly approachable or too busy.

QUESTION 2

April 2025 Question Five B

Roles of non-verbal cues in communication.

- **Repeating/Reinforcing the Verbal Message:** Non-verbal cues can mirror and strengthen what is being said verbally. For example, nodding your head while saying "yes" or pointing in a direction while giving instructions both repeat and reinforce the verbal message, making it clearer and more impactful.

- **Contradicting the Verbal Message:** One of the most significant roles of non-verbal cues is their ability to contradict verbal communication. When verbal and non-verbal messages are incongruent (e.g., saying "I'm fine" with a sad facial expression and slumped shoulders), people tend to believe the non-verbal cue as it's often perceived as more authentic and less consciously controlled. This creates "mixed signals" and can lead to confusion or distrust.
- **Substituting for the Verbal Message:** Non-verbal cues can completely replace verbal messages, especially when words are unnecessary, impossible, or inappropriate. A wave can substitute for "hello" or "goodbye," a thumbs-up can mean "okay," or a shrug can communicate "I don't know." Facial expressions alone can convey a wide range of emotions without a single word.
- **Complementing/Adding Nuance to the Verbal Message:** Non-verbal cues can add depth, emotion, or additional meaning to a verbal message. For instance, a comforting pat on the back while offering words of encouragement, or a warm smile accompanying a compliment, can enhance the sincerity and impact of the verbal communication. The tone of voice (paralanguage) can turn a simple statement into a sarcastic remark or a genuine expression of concern.
- **Regulating Conversational Flow:** Non-verbal cues act as traffic signals in conversations, helping to manage turn-taking and interaction. Eye contact (or lack thereof), head nods, leaning forward, hand gestures, and even subtle shifts in posture can signal to the other person when it's their turn to speak, when you want them to continue, or when you wish to interject.
- **Expressing Emotions and Attitudes:** Non-verbal cues are primary channels for conveying feelings and attitudes. Facial expressions, posture, gestures, and vocal tone communicate a wide range of emotions like joy, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust, often more powerfully and directly than words can. They also reveal underlying attitudes towards a person or a topic (e.g., disinterest, enthusiasm, respect, or contempt).
- **Managing Impressions and Building Rapport:** The way individuals present themselves non-verbally significantly influences how others perceive them. Confident posture, appropriate eye contact, and open gestures can build rapport, trust, and credibility. Conversely, fidgeting, crossed arms, or avoiding eye contact can convey nervousness, defensiveness, or disinterest, negatively impacting one's image.

QUESTION 3

December 2024 Question Six A

Types of gestures used in communication.

- **Emblems:** These gestures have a direct verbal translation, like a thumbs-up for "good" or a peace sign. They often substitute for words.

- **Illustrators:** These gestures accompany speech and illustrate or emphasize what is being said. For example, using your hands to describe the size of an object or tracing a path in the air.
- **Regulators:** These gestures control the flow of conversation. Examples include nodding to encourage the speaker to continue, shaking your head to disagree, or raising your hand to ask a question.
- **Adaptors:** These are unconscious gestures that often reveal a person's inner state. Examples include touching your face, adjusting your hair, or fidgeting. They can indicate nervousness, boredom, or discomfort.
- **Affect Displays:** These gestures express emotions, such as smiling, frowning, or raising your eyebrows. They often convey feelings more directly than words.

QUESTION 4

August 2024 Question Three B

Ways in which body language impacts on communication.

- **Enhances verbal messages:** Body language serves to amplify and reinforce the verbal messages we convey. For instance, gestures can emphasize points made during a conversation or presentation. A speaker who uses hand movements to illustrate their points is likely to engage their audience more effectively than one who remains still. This nonverbal reinforcement helps ensure that the message is received clearly and memorably.
- **Conveys emotions and intentions:** Nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, posture, and eye contact provide insight into a person's emotions and intentions. For example, crossed arms may indicate defensiveness or discomfort, while open arms can suggest openness and receptivity. Understanding these signals allows communicators to gauge the feelings of others, facilitating more empathetic interactions.
- **Establishes trust and rapport:** Consistent body language that aligns with verbal communication fosters trust between individuals. When a person's words match their nonverbal cues—such as maintaining eye contact while speaking—it creates a sense of authenticity and reliability. Conversely, mismatched signals can lead to confusion or mistrust; for example, saying “yes” while shaking one's head no can create doubt about sincerity.
- **Indicates engagement levels:** Body language is a powerful indicator of engagement during conversations or presentations. Positive body language—such as nodding, leaning slightly forward, and maintaining eye contact—signals active listening and interest in the discussion. In contrast, negative body language—like looking away or slouching—can suggest disinterest or distraction, potentially alienating the speaker.