

# CSC290 Communication Skills for Computer Scientists

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Lecture 5; Oct 15, 2018

## Blog post highlights

**My Proudest Creation:** <https://medium.com/@SuppaFX/my-proudest-creation-aed1c72fcd2a>

*I have been a content creator for over 5 years and have worked on a variety of projects. These projects involved expensive production gear, countless hours of filming and editing, hundreds of retakes, and a lot of patience. Yet, I am most proud of a video that was planned in 30 minutes, filmed and edited in under 8 hours, and shot on a standard DSLR.*

- ▶ Nice “hook” at the beginning to draw in readers.
- ▶ Good story telling appropriate for a blog post.
- ▶ Insightful lessons learned.

## Blog post highlights

### **The Time I Made A Difference:**

<https://liamcsjournal.wordpress.com/2018/10/11/the-time-i-made-a-difference/>

*... With a group of two other grade 12 Computer Science students, our team made a library book information system. ....*

- ▶ Clear description of the challenges and the solution.
- ▶ Often tempting to use run-on sentences when describing technical solutions, but this blog post breaks up information into small pieces.

## Blog post highlights

### **My Summer Project for 2018:**

<https://yakumoyukari17.wixsite.com/mysite/blog/my-summer-project-for-2018>

*[T]his summer, I was working with my parents in our furniture store. This was not a company equipped with all kinds of technology, and this project was one small step that I, as a computer science student, improved my parents' company.*

- ▶ Interesting project about programming in the “real world”.
- ▶ Shows the problem solving process, and what happens when your software has real users.
- ▶ This type of “automation story” can become very popular when written well.

# New Assignment - Critical Review Edit

Due October 28, 2018, 9pm EST

Improve your critical review based on the TA comments.

Remember:

- ▶ Submit using **MarkUs**
- ▶ Use 'Track Changes' in MSWord
- ▶ Do NOT remove your TA comments

# Midterm

- ▶ Two-stage test
- ▶ 60 min: individual test
- ▶ 30 min: group test

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- ▶ 60 min: individual test
- ▶ 30 min: group test
  
- ▶ You may select your own group
- ▶ If you don't have a group, you'll be grouped with others on test day.
- ▶ Groups will get ONE copy of test/answer sheet on which you must work together.

# Why?

- ▶ Get immediate feedback on your answers from your peers
- ▶ See alternative approaches to a problem
- ▶ Midterm as a collaborative learning opportunity



## Midterm - what to expect

- ▶ Bring pen, pencil and eraser
- ▶ Wait outside the room while test is being set up
- ▶ Bags, books, coats at front of class
- ▶ Cellphones OFF and in your bags
- ▶ No student can leave until end of test time
- ▶ **You must attend the LEC section in which you are registered**

# What's on the test?

- ▶ List of topics on the course website
  - ▶ Weeks 1-4
  - ▶ Don't memorize numbers (e.g. XX % of software projects fail. . . )
- ▶ Some pseduocode (if statements, while loops, for loops)
- ▶ Sample midterm posted on the course website.

# Strategies

- ▶ Talk to your group members ahead of time about how to handle disagreements
- ▶ Assign roles:
  - ▶ Who will be writing answers on behalf of group?
  - ▶ Who will lead the discussions?
  - ▶ etc.
- ▶ Define discussion strategies, to ensure everyone's input is heard

## Next Lecture

- ▶ Presentation Skill
- ▶ Any volunteers to present in front of the class?
  - ▶ 2-3 min presentation on any (CS-related) topic

# Interpersonal Communication

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How not to be a jerk

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How not to be come off as a jerk

# Strategies

- ▶ “I” Statements
- ▶ Perception Checking



## Scenario

*One of your group members tend to contribute a large quantity of work, but the quality is low and requires the group to redo a lot of his work. As a result, he feels underappreciated while the group feels resentful.*

## Scenario

*You are the odd person out in a group of three. You often don't share the opinion of the other two group members. The other two group members have been friends for some time, so some conversations about the group assignment take place without you. You are always the minority when it comes to group decisions.*

## Scenario

*One of your group members has been missing group meetings recently and has contributed very little to the group. The assignment deadline is approaching and the individual has not responded to your last meeting request. The meeting is in 2 days.*

## Scenario

*Your co-worker, while not malicious, is extremely blunt. She mentions that the vacation time you took severely affected the productivity of the rest of the team, and that it's your fault that the team missed a deadline.*

## “I” Statements

Accept responsibility for your feelings

Instead of:

*You're going to make us fail the project because you didn't finish your part!*

Say:

*I feel frustrated and concerned when you don't come to meetings with your completed part of the project because I don't want our project to fail.*

## “I” Statements

Avoids blame, hostility, and accusations, while expressing your emotions.

***I feel...*** (State your emotion) ***when you...*** (describe their behavior or under what conditions you feel this way)  
***because...*** (explain why their behavior or the conditions cause you to feel this way).

## Rephrasing exercise:

Rephrase:

*You rewrote all my parts of the PowerPoint presentation and you've screwed it all up.*

Format:

***I feel...** (State your emotion) **when you...** (describe their behavior or under what conditions you feel this way) **because...** (explain why their behavior or the conditions cause you to feel this way).*

## Rephrasing exercise:

Rephrase:

*You guys are leaving me out. Can we please only talk about the project during project meetings?*

Format:

***I feel...** (State your emotion) **when you...** (describe their behavior or under what conditions you feel this way) **because...** (explain why their behavior or the conditions cause you to feel this way).*



## What's wrong with this?

*I feel like you are intentionally sabotaging the project when you rewrite my slides because I spent a lot of time on them.*

## Another example

Slightly different format, but accepts responsibility for own feelings:

*I'm feeling frustrated because I need appreciation for my contribution. Would you be willing to share areas where the slides align with the group's goals, as well as those where they may not?*

## Grammar Break

What is wrong with this sentence?

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Fixes:

- ▶ The error message was confusing. Users could not understand it.
- ▶ The error message was confusing; users could not understand it.
- ▶ The error message was confusing, and users could not understand it.

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Need a comma to separate the independent & dependent clauses.

Fixes:

- ▶ Since other factors play a role in hiring decisions, having only a single set of skills is not enough.
- ▶ Other factors play a role in hiring decisions. Having only a single set of skills is not enough.

## What is the difference between ; and :?

**Semicolon (;):** separates two independent clauses (two sentences) that are related.

**Colon (:):** gives more information about something, or start a list or a definition.

# Worksheet

Work with a partner!

## Perception Checking

## Perception Check



Figure 1: What do you see?

# Perception Check

A way to check your understanding of someone's words or behaviour in a way that reduces defensiveness or potential conflict.

Format:

1. **Description:** of words or behaviour observed.
2. **Interpretations:** two possible interpretations of the behaviour.
3. **Clarification:** request for clarification.

Avoids blame / hostility / accusations.

## Perception Check Example

- ▶ Description: *“When you didn’t respond to my last email”*
- ▶ Interpretations: *“I wasn’t sure if I said something wrong, or if you were really busy”*
- ▶ Clarification: *“What’s going on?”*

## Perception Check Exercise

*Your co-worker, while not malicious, is extremely blunt. She mentions that the vacation time you took severely affected the productivity of the rest of the team, and that it's your fault that the team missed a deadline.*

- ▶ Description:
- ▶ Interpretations:
- ▶ Clarification:



## Perception Checking

*When you looked bored at the last meeting, I wasn't sure if you thought the content was too repetitive or if you just weren't interested. What's up with that?*

## Perception Checking is about Listening

Sometimes people want to be heard and understood, not necessarily to convince you.

People need to feel appreciated and listened to.

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## Urgency

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Urgency is not an excuse for unprofessional behaviour.

*You haven't been responding to our meeting requests. Have you been getting these emails, or does the time not work for you? Could you let us know if there is a better way to get through to you? I really don't think we can push the meeting back further. We want you to be a part of the team, but if you don't respond we'll have to meet without you.*

## Aside: Tips for Group Work

- ▶ Allow group members to have ownership of deliverables and deadlines
- ▶ Be considerate of other people's communication preferences

## Hanlon's razor (modified)

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- ▶ People are generally *not* jerks.
- ▶ Things go wrong all the time.



## Be Respectful, Be Kind

Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about.

Be someone that others find easy to work with.

## References

0. CSC290 Slides, Fall 2017, by Nia McCash
1. <https://compassioncoach.com/blog/when-use-i-statements>
2. [http://www.creducation.net/resources/perception\\_checking/](http://www.creducation.net/resources/perception_checking/)
3. <https://alistapart.com/article/people-skills-for-web-workers>