

your verbal responses.

- \* Your total confidence or non confidence in your decisions can be displayed by your body language.

There are two basic themes in the Art of Communication.

1. Officials must take pains to be receptive to messages aimed at them. Receptivity can be improved by practicing active listening and being aware of and overcoming barriers to listening.
2. The way in which officials deliver messages is extremely important to their success. Officials should be aware of their spoken language and body language and try to use them effectively to convey their intended messages.

#### **In-Effective Verbal Communication:**

*Barking orders like “shut up”, “sit down”  
“Be quiet, not another word from you!”  
“Stop complaining or you’ll be sorry!”*

*“I don’t care what you think!”  
“You don’t know what you’re talking about!”*

*“Learn the rules before you complain!”  
“You won’t get a call if you keep complaining!”*

*“You should worry about your team more than our officiating!”*

#### **Effective Verbal Communication:**

*“Would you please stop making those comments, they are inappropriate.”  
“You are distracting my concentration”*

*“How can I help you?”  
“Would you care to know what I saw?”  
or “If that is the way it happened I got it wrong.”*

*“I will talk to you at the next chance!”  
“I’ll talk about your concerns with my partner at the next chance.”  
You might be right. Let me keep an eye on it”*

#### **WHAT’S YOUR CALL?:**

Red 5 jumps in a shot for goal. Blue 4 legally blocks Red 5’s shot;

- i. Before the ball has left Red 5’s hand, Red 5 returns to the floor without having released the ball.
- ii. After the ball has left Red 5’s hand, the ball returns to Red 5 while Red 5 is still in the air. Red 5 returns to the floor without having released the ball.
- iii. Before the ball has left Red 5’s hand, Red 5 returns to the floor without having released the ball and Blue 4 still has his hand on the ball as well.

The referee should rule;

- a) A travel violation by Red 5 as he has returned to the floor without passing or shooting the ball. (*FIBA Official Rules 2008 Art 25.2.2*)
- b) Play on, as Red 5 has not committed a travel violation, as the ball was released by Red 5. Red 5 is then allowed to retrieve the ball and even come back down to the floor with it. (*FIBA Official Rules 2008 Art 14.3*)
- c) A jump ball situation, as Red 5 was forced back to the floor by Blue 4 contacting the ball. (*FIBA Official Rules 2008 Art 14.3 & Art 12.1.2*)



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## **BUILDING BETTER BASKETBALL**

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#### **The Art of Communication Player/Coach - Referee Relations**



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## Referee Communication:

There are three underlying truths about communication:

1. It is inevitable; players react to your behaviour, not what you intended to say.
2. It is irreversible; once communication has taken place it is impossible to undo.
3. It is contextual; it depends on the background, the relative situation.

The manner, style, and content of all messages are a matter of conscious choice. Top officials always seem to be communicating in a calm, straight forward fashion. Why? Because effective communication techniques are devised, worked on and learned, over time and gained with experience. Good officials learn to weigh their words carefully, to develop mechanisms (expressions, gestures, posture) that convey a confident and soothing message, and to couch remarks in terms that solve problems rather than escalate them. Effective communication skills are vital to successful officiating.

Communication is about: 1. Listening 2. Verbal Skills 3. Non Verbal Skills

### 1. Listening:

- The first response from a referee to an irate player or coach should come from the ears, not the mouth. The art of communication revolves around your ability to listen.
- If a player or coach wishes to challenge you, “don’t interrupt them.” How often does an irate player or coach start repeating themselves if you do not interrupt or argue.
- Allow them to get it all out as they then will become quiet. (a good approach is to anticipate a challenge and before they say anything, ask them “what did you see, or what did you think happened?”)
- By not interrupting you allow yourself to take in the entire context of the message, empathise with the person, and identify the real reasons for the communication.
- Usually behind every approach from a player or coach there is a hidden message. If you can identify this motivation you are half way to pacifying the situation.
- An enemy of effective listening is impulse, because impulse is often triggered by anger.
- An immediate reaction to a verbal challenge is to deny the challenge and defend your position. This will impede your ability to effectively listen.
- Free your brain from its tendency to prepare a response before the message has been recorded.
- Take a big breath, this helps to gain your composure. Look them straight in the eye, block out what else is going on around you and give them your full attention.
- Show everyone that you are truly in control by adopting a truly professional stance and approach to a player or coach who is communicating with you.
- Once you have actively listened you are in the perfect position to “Engage your brain to then open your mouth.”

### 2. Verbal Skills:

- Verbal skills are an essential part of everyday life. Those who display good verbal skills are usually very successful.
- An official’s status and progress are often determined by his or her degree of skill in the

spoken language.

- When players or coaches blow up and things get a little heated, that is when a referee must be most vigilant with listening and verbal skills.
- How you respond will determine the outcome of the confrontation. “It is not what you say but how you say it!”
- Referee’s verbal communication begins at the commencement of the game. The introductory pleasantries that should happen before the game with a coach and players will determine how communications will go for the remainder of the game.
- Once the game commences, the accepted practices of communication between players and coaches must be adhered to.
  - According to the rules, the captain is a player who represents his team on the court. He may communicate with the officials during the game to obtain information. This shall be done in a courteous manner and only when the ball is dead and the game clock is stopped.
  - Realistically, players will wish to communicate with a referee during the game. The official must establish that if the communication becomes unacceptable the process with the captain will be stringently adhered to.
  - The communication with coaches must adopt the following three step approach.

### The Three Step Approach:

- 1) If a coach is addressing you politely, or civilly challenging a referee is obliged to respond in a controlled and polite manner. If warranted a quiet word is appropriate, possibly when you are the trail official standing right in front of him. (“coach, I heard you and that’s enough, or coach, talk to me, don’t yell at me or jump on me.”) It is so important that referees do not entirely ignore the coach, but respond and acknowledge you have heard their concern.
- 2) If the coach decides to take it one step further, then a more stern, visual or formal warning is appropriate. At an appropriate time, usually during a stoppage in play, say something like, “coach that’s enough, this is your formal warning, you are getting very close.” At the same time, give a visual signal, an open hand being pushed to the ground as if to indicate to slow down along with a stern facial expression is better than the stop sign, with your hand straight out in front in the coach’s face which will cause further irritation. That “do not go any further” communication lets him and everyone else know you’ve had enough.
- 3) If the coach continues unheeded after the warning, he has earned a **Technical Foul**.

### 3. Non Verbal Skills:

- \* How something is said is more important than what is said.
- \* Body language, your facial expressions and posture, may send the totally wrong message even if you are saying the right things.
- \* Gestures, body positioning, eye contact, and other visual cues can actually overwhelm verbal messages.
- \* Take extra care to ensure that you are imparting the right message. If you appear to be open and receptive, the player or coach will have the impression you are willing to listen.
- \* Your facial expressions and hand gestures will determine the attitude you have towards