
Certificate Programme in Occupational Therapy Supervision

Communication Skills for Occupational Therapy Supervisors

Active Listening – The practice of fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what a supervisee says. Related terms: paraphrasing, reflective listening. Example: Restating a trainee’s concern before offering advice. Challenges include personal bias and environmental distractions.

Assertiveness – Communicating needs and expectations clearly while respecting others’ rights. Related terms: confidence, boundary setting. Practical use: Giving constructive feedback without aggression. Supervisors may fear conflict, leading to overly passive styles.

Barriers to Communication – Physical, psychological, or cultural obstacles that impede message exchange. Related terms: noise, assumptions. Example: Language differences causing misinterpretation of clinical instructions. Overcoming barriers requires awareness and adaptive strategies.

Body Language – Non-verbal cues such as posture, facial expressions, and gestures that convey attitudes. Related terms: kinesics, eye contact. Supervisors use open stance to encourage openness; misaligned gestures can create mistrust.

Clinical Documentation – Written records that reflect client assessment, intervention, and outcomes. Related terms: charting, record keeping. Clear documentation supports communication among multidisciplinary teams. Challenges involve time constraints and maintaining confidentiality.

Clarity – The quality of being easily understood, avoiding ambiguity. Related terms: simplicity, precision. Example: Using plain language when explaining assessment tools. Lack of clarity can lead to errors in client care.

Collaboration – Joint effort among supervisors, supervisees, and other professionals to achieve shared goals. Related terms: teamwork, interdisciplinary work. Practical application: Co-designing a client-centred intervention plan. Barriers include role confusion and competing priorities.

Confidentiality – Ethical duty to protect client information from unauthorized disclosure. Related terms: privacy, data protection. Supervisors must model secure communication practices, such as encrypted email. Breaches can damage trust and legal standing.

Conflict Resolution – Process of addressing and managing disagreements constructively. Related terms: negotiation, mediation. Example: Facilitating a discussion when a supervisee feels unfairly evaluated. Challenges include emotional intensity and power differentials.

Constructive Feedback – Specific, balanced information aimed at improving performance. Related terms: praise, corrective feedback. Use the “SBI” model (Situation-Behavior-Impact) to structure comments. Poorly

delivered feedback may demotivate learners.

Cultural Competence – Ability to understand, respect, and adapt to diverse cultural perspectives. Related terms: cultural humility, sensitivity. Supervisors demonstrate competence by acknowledging cultural influences on client goals. Challenges arise when cultural assumptions are unexamined.

Critical Thinking – Analyzing information objectively to make reasoned judgments. Related terms: problem solving, reflective practice. In communication, it involves questioning assumptions behind a supervisee's statement. Over-reliance on intuition can limit depth.

De-briefing – Structured reflection after a clinical encounter or teaching session. Related terms: reflection, after-action review. Example: Discussing a challenging client case to extract learning points. Time pressure often limits thorough de-briefs.

Empathy – The capacity to understand and share another's feelings. Related terms: compassion, perspective-taking. Supervisors model empathy by acknowledging supervisee stress. Excessive empathy without boundaries may lead to burnout.

Emotional Intelligence – Ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others. Related terms: self-awareness, social skills. High EI enhances communication effectiveness, especially in high-stress environments. Developing EI requires deliberate practice.

Feedback Loop – Ongoing exchange where information is given, received, and acted upon. Related terms: iterative communication, response. Effective loops ensure supervisees adjust practice promptly. Interruptions can break the cycle and delay improvement.

Goal-Setting Communication – Discussing and defining clear, measurable objectives with supervisees. Related terms: SMART goals, planning. Example: Co-creating a timeline for mastering a specific assessment tool. Vague goals reduce motivation and clarity.

Group Supervision – Facilitated discussion among multiple supervisees to share experiences and solutions. Related terms: peer learning, collective reflection. Benefits include diverse perspectives; challenges involve managing dominant personalities and ensuring equal participation.

Information Overload – Excessive data that hampers processing and decision-making. Related terms: cognitive load, saturation. Supervisors must prioritize essential information to avoid overwhelming trainees. Chunking content can mitigate overload.

Interpersonal Skills – Abilities facilitating effective interaction with others, such as rapport building and conflict handling. Related terms: social competence, relational skills. Supervisors develop these through role-modeling and coaching. Deficits may impair team cohesion.

Listening Barriers – Personal or environmental factors that hinder attentive hearing. Related terms: selective hearing, preconceptions. Example: Multitasking during a supervisee's presentation reduces comprehension. Strategies include minimizing distractions and confirming understanding.

Non-verbal Communication – Transmission of messages without words, including facial expressions, gestures, and tone. Related terms: body language, paralanguage. Aligning non-verbal cues with spoken content builds credibility. Incongruence can cause confusion.

Paraphrasing – Restating a speaker's message in one's own words to confirm understanding. Related terms: summarizing, reflective listening. Example: "So you are saying the client's motivation is low because of recent life changes?" Challenges include over-paraphrasing which may seem patronising.

Patience – Ability to remain calm while waiting for information or response. Related terms: tolerance, composure. Supervisors exhibit patience when supervisees need repeated explanations. Impatience can create a hostile learning climate.

Peer Feedback – Input provided by colleagues rather than senior staff. Related terms: 360-degree feedback, collaborative appraisal. Encouraging peer feedback fosters a supportive culture. Risks include bias and lack of authority.

Professional Boundaries – Limits that define appropriate roles and relationships. Related terms: ethical limits, role clarity. Clear boundaries prevent dual relationships and maintain objectivity. Breaches may erode trust and professional integrity.

Reflective Practice – Ongoing self-evaluation of actions to improve future performance. Related terms: reflection, metacognition. Supervisors ask "What worked, what didn't?" after a session. Time constraints often limit deep reflection.

Respectful Communication – Interacting with dignity, acknowledging each person's value. Related terms: courtesy, politeness. Using appropriate titles and tone demonstrates respect. Disrespectful language can damage supervisory relationships.

Role Modelling – Demonstrating desired behaviours for learners to emulate. Related terms: mentorship, demonstration. Supervisors showcase effective communication during client interactions. Inconsistent modelling creates confusion about expectations.

Self-Disclosure – Sharing personal experiences relevant to the learning context. Related terms: personal sharing, vulnerability. Example: Describing a past challenge with client adherence to illustrate coping strategies. Over-disclosure may shift focus away from the supervisee.

Self-Regulation – Managing one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours to achieve goals. Related terms: self-control, impulse management. Supervisors practice self-regulation when delivering difficult feedback. Failure to self-regulate can lead to reactive communication.

Setting Expectations – Clearly articulating standards, responsibilities, and outcomes. Related terms: clarifying roles, performance criteria. Example: Outlining required documentation format at the start of placement. Unclear expectations often result in repeated errors.

Silence – Intentional pause allowing time for thought or emotional processing. Related terms: pause, reflective pause. Using silence after a supervisee's statement encourages deeper elaboration. Overuse may

cause discomfort or perceived disengagement.

Social Listening – Attentive observation of group dynamics and informal cues. Related terms: situational awareness, environmental scanning. Supervisors note shifts in team morale to address emerging issues. Ignoring social signals can lead to missed opportunities for intervention.

Spoken Clarity – Articulation, pacing, and volume that enhance comprehension. Related terms: diction, enunciation. Speaking slowly and using simple terms aids understanding, especially for non-native speakers. Monotone delivery may reduce engagement.

Standardised Communication Tools – Structured formats such as SBAR (Situation-Background-Assessment-Recommendation). Related terms: communication protocol, templates. Using SBAR in hand-over improves consistency. Resistance may arise if staff view tools as bureaucratic.

Summarising – Concisely restating key points of a conversation. Related terms: synthesis, recap. Example: "To recap, the client's goal is to increase ADL independence by three months." Failure to summarise can leave critical details forgotten.

Supervisory Dialogue – Ongoing conversational exchange focused on learning and performance. Related terms: coaching conversation, mentorship talk. Effective dialogues balance guidance with autonomy. Power imbalance may inhibit open sharing.

Team Communication – Interaction among multidisciplinary members to coordinate care. Related terms: interprofessional communication, collaboration. Regular briefings ensure all parties are updated on client progress. Miscommunication can result in duplicated efforts.

Technology-Mediated Communication – Use of digital platforms (email, video-conferencing) for information exchange. Related terms: e-communication, tele-supervision. Benefits include flexibility; challenges involve technical glitches and reduced non-verbal cues.

Therapeutic Alliance – Collaborative partnership between therapist and client fostering trust. Related terms: client-centered relationship, rapport. Supervisors teach strategies to strengthen alliance, such as active listening. Weak alliances impede therapeutic outcomes.

Time Management in Communication – Allocating appropriate duration for discussions without sacrificing depth. Related terms: scheduling, prioritisation. Example: Setting a 15-minute limit for case updates to stay on schedule. Over-rushing may compromise message quality.

Verbal Communication – Transmission of information through spoken words. Related terms: oral communication, speech. Clarity, tone, and vocabulary are crucial. Inadequate verbal skills can lead to misinterpretation of clinical instructions.

Visual Aids – Use of charts, diagrams, and slides to support verbal messages. Related terms: graphics, multimedia. Example: Displaying a flowchart of the OT assessment process during training. Over-reliance can distract from core content.

Voice Tone – Pitch, volume, and emotional quality of speech. Related terms: intonation, prosody. A calm tone conveys confidence; a harsh tone may cause anxiety. Supervisors must modulate tone to suit the learning context.

Written Communication – Conveying information through text, such as emails, reports, and feedback forms. Related terms: documentation, correspondence. Clear writing reduces ambiguity. Common challenges include jargon overload and lack of proofreading.

Active Questioning – Using purposeful queries to elicit information and encourage critical thinking. Related terms: probing, Socratic questioning. Example: “What alternative strategies could you consider for this client?” Poorly framed questions may lead to yes/no answers only.

Agenda Setting – Establishing topics to be covered at the start of a supervisory meeting. Related terms: meeting plan, prioritisation. Setting an agenda keeps discussions focused. Ignoring agenda can cause digressions and inefficient use of time.

Boundary Violations – Breaches of professional limits that may harm the supervisory relationship. Related terms: ethical breach, role confusion. Recognising early signs, such as over-personal sharing, is essential. Failure to address violations can erode trust.

Case Conferencing – Structured discussion of a client case among professionals. Related terms: multidisciplinary meeting, case review. Supervisors facilitate balanced participation to integrate diverse perspectives. Scheduling conflicts often impede regular conferences.

Cultural Sensitivity – Awareness and respect for cultural differences influencing communication. Related terms: cultural awareness, inclusivity. Supervisors model sensitivity by asking about cultural preferences. Lack of sensitivity may lead to client disengagement.

Communication Audit – Systematic review of communication processes to identify strengths and gaps. Related terms: quality assurance, evaluation. Example: Analyzing hand-over notes for completeness. Audits require time and stakeholder cooperation.

Communication Planning – Designing strategies for information exchange before implementation. Related terms: strategy, roadmap. Supervisors develop plans for new policy roll-outs, ensuring clarity and stakeholder buy-in. Inadequate planning can cause confusion.

Conflict Avoidance – Tendency to sidestep disagreements rather than address them. Related terms: avoidance, suppression. While it may preserve short-term harmony, unresolved issues can fester. Supervisors must balance diplomacy with assertiveness.

Consultation Skills – Ability to seek and provide expert advice effectively. Related terms: advisory communication, expertise sharing. Example: Requesting a specialist’s input on a complex sensory integration case. Poor consultation may result in incomplete information exchange.

Critical Feedback – Direct, often negative, information aimed at correcting performance. Related terms: corrective feedback, performance review. Delivering critical feedback requires timing, specificity, and

empathy. Over-critical tone can demotivate learners.

Decision-Making Communication – Conveying rationale behind choices to ensure transparency. Related terms: justification, rationale sharing. Example: Explaining why a particular intervention was selected for a client. Omission of rationale may lead to perceived arbitrariness.

Emotional Regulation Strategies – Techniques to manage feelings during communication. Related terms: coping mechanisms, stress management. Deep breathing before a tense supervision session helps maintain composure. Ignoring emotional spikes can result in reactive comments.

Feedback Timing – Choosing optimal moments to give performance information. Related terms: immediacy, delayed feedback. Immediate feedback after a skill demonstration reinforces learning; delayed feedback may diminish impact. Balancing urgency with readiness is key.

Goal Alignment – Ensuring supervisee objectives match organisational and client priorities. Related terms: strategic fit, coherence. Supervisors facilitate alignment through collaborative planning. Misalignment can cause frustration and reduced efficacy.

Group Dynamics – Interpersonal processes that occur within a team setting. Related terms: cohesion, group roles. Supervisors monitor dynamics to prevent dominance or exclusion. Ignoring dynamics may lead to disengagement.

Intercultural Communication – Exchange of information across cultural boundaries. Related terms: cross-cultural dialogue, multicultural communication. Using culturally appropriate metaphors enhances understanding. Misinterpretation of cultural symbols can cause offense.

Listening Skills – Abilities that enable accurate reception of spoken messages. Related terms: auditory attention, comprehension. Practice includes avoiding interruptions and confirming meaning. Poor listening leads to errors in client care plans.

Message Framing – Presenting information in a way that influences perception. Related terms: gain-loss framing, rhetorical framing. Framing a change as an opportunity rather than a threat increases acceptance. Inappropriate framing may trigger resistance.

Non-judgmental Stance – Maintaining an open, unbiased attitude during communication. Related terms: neutrality, impartiality. Supervisors adopt this stance to foster safe learning environments. Hidden judgments can undermine trust.

Open-Ended Questions – Queries that invite elaborate responses rather than simple yes/no answers. Related terms: exploratory questioning, probing. Example: "How do you feel about the client's progress?" This technique encourages reflection. Over-use may lead to unfocused discussions.

Paraverbal Cues – Aspects of speech such as tone, pace, and volume that convey meaning. Related terms: vocalics, prosody. A warm tone can soften criticism; a flat tone may convey disinterest. Supervisors must align paraverbal cues with intent.

Performance Appraisal Communication – Dialogue surrounding formal evaluation of supervisee competence. Related terms: review meeting, assessment discussion. Clear criteria and evidence support fairness. Ambiguity can cause perceived bias.

Professional Language – Terminology appropriate to the occupational therapy field. Related terms: jargon, technical terms. Using professional language conveys expertise but must be balanced with lay explanations when needed. Over-jargon may alienate learners.

Reflective Questioning – Prompting self-analysis to deepen understanding. Related terms: metacognitive prompting, insight-driving. Example: "What would you do differently next time?" Encourages autonomy. Poorly timed questions may interrupt flow.

Remote Supervision – Providing guidance when supervisor and supervisee are not co-located. Related terms: virtual supervision, tele-mentoring. Utilises video calls, shared documents, and asynchronous messages. Challenges include limited non-verbal feedback and technology reliability.

Reporting Structure – Hierarchical arrangement defining who reports to whom. Related terms: chain of command, reporting lines. Clear structures facilitate efficient communication pathways. Ambiguity in reporting can cause duplicated efforts.

Self-Assessment Communication – Encouraging supervisees to articulate their own strengths and weaknesses. Related terms: self-evaluation, introspection. Supervisors ask supervisees to describe recent successes. Inaccurate self-assessment may hinder growth.

Session Planning – Organising content and objectives for a supervisory meeting. Related terms: agenda setting, preparation. Effective planning ensures coverage of key topics within allotted time. Lack of planning often results in unfocused sessions.

Skill Transfer Communication – Conveying knowledge so that supervisees can apply it in varied contexts. Related terms: knowledge translation, application. Example: Demonstrating a technique then discussing how it adapts to different client settings. Failure to address transfer limits practical utility.

Social Presence – Perceived availability and warmth in mediated communication. Related terms: relational presence, online rapport. Using video and expressive gestures enhances social presence. Low presence may cause disengagement in virtual supervision.

Stakeholder Communication – Interaction with individuals or groups invested in client outcomes. Related terms: client communication, family liaison. Supervisors guide supervisees on appropriate stakeholder engagement. Miscommunication can strain relationships.

Strategic Listening – Listening with a purpose aligned to organizational goals. Related terms: goal-oriented listening, focused listening. Supervisors listen for cues indicating systemic issues. Over-focus on strategy may overlook personal concerns.

Summative Feedback – Evaluation provided at the end of a learning period. Related terms: final appraisal, outcome feedback. Summative feedback integrates multiple performance dimensions. It may be less

actionable than formative feedback if not accompanied by specific examples.

Supportive Communication – Language and behaviours that encourage and reassure. Related terms: encouragement, affirmation. Phrases such as “You’re making progress” boost morale. Over-support without challenge may hinder development.

Team Briefings – Short, focused meetings to share updates and priorities. Related terms: huddles, stand-ups. Supervisors lead briefings to align team focus. Inadequate briefings can result in missed information.

Teaching Scripts – Pre-written dialogue outlines for common instructional scenarios. Related terms: cue cards, dialogue templates. Scripts ensure consistency in delivering key messages. Rigid use may reduce authenticity.

Therapeutic Communication – Interactions that promote client well-being and participation. Related terms: client-centred dialogue, healing conversation. Supervisors train supervisees in techniques such as validation and open questioning. Misuse can impede therapeutic alliance.

Time-Bound Communication – Delivering messages within defined temporal limits. Related terms: deadline communication, time constraints. Example: Providing a concise hand-over within a five-minute window. Rushing may sacrifice clarity.

Trauma-Informed Communication – Approach that recognises the impact of trauma on communication patterns. Related terms: safety, empowerment. Supervisors model calm, predictable interactions. Ignoring trauma cues can trigger re-experiencing.

Verbal Assertiveness – Expressing thoughts confidently while respecting others. Related terms: directness, firmness. Example: “I need the assessment report by Friday to meet the client’s deadline.” Over-assertiveness may be perceived as aggression.

Virtual Collaboration – Joint work using digital platforms. Related terms: online teamwork, remote co-creation. Tools such as shared whiteboards facilitate joint planning. Technical glitches can disrupt flow.

Visual Communication – Conveying ideas through images, symbols, or diagrams. Related terms: infographics, visual aids. Using a flow diagram to illustrate assessment steps aids comprehension. Poor design can confuse rather than clarify.

Voice Modulation – Adjusting pitch and volume to suit context. Related terms: vocal dynamics, speech variation. Softening voice when discussing sensitive issues conveys empathy. Monotone delivery may reduce engagement.

Workplace Communication Policy – Formal guidelines governing information exchange. Related terms: protocol, standard operating procedure. Supervisors ensure adherence to policy for confidentiality and professionalism. Lack of awareness may lead to policy breaches.

Active Empathy – Demonstrating understanding through both feeling and action. Related terms: empathic response, compassionate action. Supervisors not only acknowledge emotions but also offer resources.

Token empathy without follow-through appears insincere.

Bias Awareness – Recognising personal prejudices that may affect communication. Related terms: implicit bias, self-reflection. Supervisors reflect on language that may marginalise. Unchecked bias can perpetuate inequities.

Communication Competency Framework – Structured model outlining required communication abilities. Related terms: skill matrix, proficiency levels. Framework guides assessment and development planning. Incomplete frameworks may overlook critical skills.

Conflict Management Styles – Preferred approaches to handling disagreement (e.g., collaborating, compromising). Related terms: Thomas-Kelley model, conflict resolution. Supervisors identify their style to adapt to supervisee needs. Rigid adherence to one style can limit effectiveness.

Contextual Communication – Tailoring messages to the situational environment. Related terms: situational awareness, adaptive messaging. Example: Adjusting language when speaking with a new graduate versus an experienced therapist. Failure to adapt may reduce relevance.

Critical Incident Debrief – Structured reflection after a significant event. Related terms: after-action review, incident analysis. Supervisors guide debrief to extract learning and prevent recurrence. Time pressure often delays debriefs.

Decision-Making Dialogue – Conversational process that leads to choice selection. Related terms: consensus building, deliberation. Supervisors facilitate group input to reach client-focused decisions. Dominant voices can skew outcomes.

Emotional Safety – Creating an environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing thoughts without fear of judgment. Related terms: psychological safety, trust. Supervisors foster safety by validating concerns. Breaches erode openness.

Feedback Sandwich – Technique of delivering feedback with positive comments before and after criticism. Related terms: layered feedback, balanced critique. While it eases delivery, over-use may dilute the core message.

Goal Review – Periodic assessment of progress toward established objectives. Related terms: performance monitoring, outcome evaluation. Supervisors discuss achievements and obstacles. Neglecting reviews can lead to drift from intended outcomes.

Interpersonal Conflict – Disagreement arising from personal interactions. Related terms: relational tension, interpersonal dispute. Supervisors mediate by clarifying perspectives and seeking common ground. Ignoring conflict can exacerbate tension.

Knowledge Transfer – Process of moving expertise from supervisor to supervisee. Related terms: mentorship, teaching. Effective transfer includes demonstration, explanation, and supervised practice. Barriers include time scarcity and differing learning styles.

Learning Styles – Preferred methods individuals use to acquire information (visual, auditory, kinesthetic). Related terms: modality, preference. Supervisors adapt communication to match styles, enhancing retention. Rigid adherence to one style may limit reach.

Micro-Feedback – Immediate, brief comments on specific actions. Related terms: real-time feedback, spot correction. Example: "Great eye contact just now." Micro-feedback reinforces positive behaviour instantly. Over-frequency may become intrusive.

Non-verbal Synchrony – Mirroring body language to build rapport. Related terms: mirroring, rapport building. Subtle matching of posture signals empathy. Excessive mirroring can be perceived as mocking.

Observation Skills – Ability to notice verbal and non-verbal cues during interactions. Related terms: perception, attentiveness. Supervisors use observation to assess supervisee competence. Missing cues may lead to inaccurate assessments.

Parental Involvement Communication – Engaging family members in client care discussions. Related terms: family liaison, caregiver communication. Supervisors coach supervisees on respectful, clear explanations. Cultural differences may affect expectations of involvement.

Performance Metrics Communication – Sharing quantitative indicators of work quality. Related terms: KPI, benchmark. Transparent metrics motivate improvement. Over-emphasis on numbers can overlook qualitative aspects.

Professional Development Dialogue – Conversation focused on career growth and skill acquisition. Related terms: coaching, mentorship. Supervisors explore interests and set development plans. Lack of dialogue may stall progression.

Reflective Listening – Restating emotions and content to demonstrate understanding. Related terms: empathy, validation. Example: "It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed by the caseload." Failure to reflect accurately can cause frustration.

Remote Feedback – Providing performance comments via digital means. Related terms: e-feedback, virtual appraisal. Video recordings allow detailed review. Delayed response may reduce impact.

Self-Disclosure Boundaries – Limits on personal information shared in professional contexts. Related terms: privacy, professional distance. Supervisors balance openness with relevance. Over-sharing can blur supervisor-supervisee roles.

Strategic Communication Planning – Designing communication actions to achieve specific organisational aims. Related terms: communication strategy, rollout plan. Includes audience analysis and message sequencing. Poor planning leads to mixed messages.

Team Cohesion Communication – Exchanges that strengthen group unity. Related terms: bonding, group solidarity. Regular check-ins and shared successes foster cohesion. Ignoring cohesion can cause fragmentation.

Therapeutic Narrative – Storytelling approach to convey client progress. Related terms: case story, client journey. Supervisors teach supervisees to frame outcomes positively. Inaccurate narratives may mislead stakeholders.

Transparent Communication – Open sharing of information, intentions, and decisions. Related terms: openness, honesty. Transparency builds trust and reduces speculation. Excessive disclosure of confidential details breaches ethics.

Virtual Hand-over – Remote transfer of client information between shifts or professionals. Related terms: electronic hand-over, digital briefing. Structured templates ensure completeness. Technical failures can compromise safety.

Work-Life Balance Dialogue – Discussing strategies to manage professional and personal demands. Related terms: wellbeing, burnout prevention. Supervisors encourage self-care practices. Ignoring balance may increase attrition.