



Teamwork in the ATC Environment

NEXT



Teamwork skills are an important part of the job.

LEARN MORE

Previous studies have reported that as many as 70% of accidents were caused by problems with communication, a key skill in teamwork. Therefore, good technical skills alone will not make you a good controller; you must also be able to work with others in a team environment.



Purpose

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This lesson will introduce you to team communication, conflict management, and coordination, and how they are used in the Air Traffic Control (ATC) environment.



Objectives

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At the conclusion of this lesson, you will be able to identify:

- 1. Characteristics of effective teams
- 2. Functions affecting team performance
- 3. Stages of group development





Teams

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Team Definition

A team is a group of people:

- With a common purpose
- Who work together in an interdependent, collaborative way in order to produce quality results

Working as a team on an Air Traffic Control (ATC) position requires communication and close interaction with team members.

Performance as a cohesive team will result in the continuous safe and efficient operation of an ATC sector.





Teams

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Some Advantages of Teams

Teams can:

- Provide many different perspectives and ideas which sometimes lead to higher quality decisions
- Handle complex tasks and learn from experience more effectively than individuals
- Identify and correct errors better than individuals
- Provide back-up and support to each other
- Out-perform individuals





Teams

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Some Disadvantages of Teams

Teams can take longer to make decisions.

Teams can make poor decisions due to "group think" - pressure to agree in order to avoid conflict - or other interpersonal problems within the team.

Teams can have other problems, such as:

- Personal conflict
- Individuals not feeling responsible for the team's work
- Uneven workload



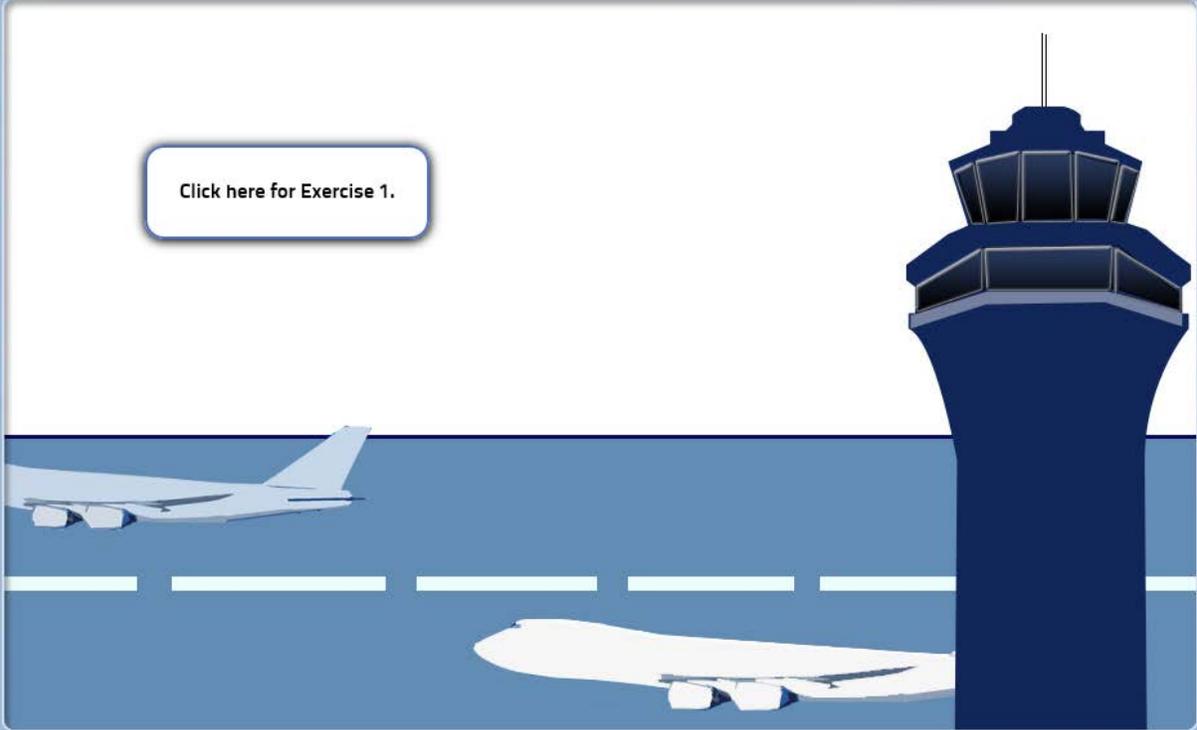


Exercise 1: "THE ALBATROSS"

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Stages of Group Development

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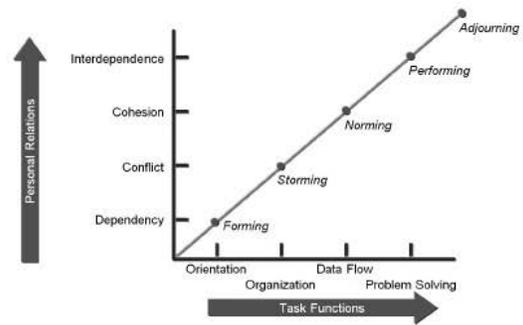
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Stages of Group Development

Groups typically follow a pattern of development that has been described as:

- **Forming**
 - Example: Looking for direction, procedures, tasking, or purpose. Getting to know each other.
- **Storming**
 - Example: Competing ideas and opinions.
- **Norming**
 - Example: Leadership and roles form. Rules and procedures are clarified.
- **Performing**
 - Example: Working relationships are refined. Work processes and products are improved.

Short-term groups experience a fifth stage called **adjourning**.





Stages of Group Development

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Stages of Group Development

Stages are sequential.

Unresolved issues in early stages affect later stages.

- Example: A group had difficulty getting all of its members to attend the meetings regularly. After four meetings, no one was quite sure how far the group had progressed with its work or what decisions had been made. When the time came for the group to make a final decision, they were unable to come to an agreement.

There is no precise timetable for group development. Every group is different.





Stages of Group Development

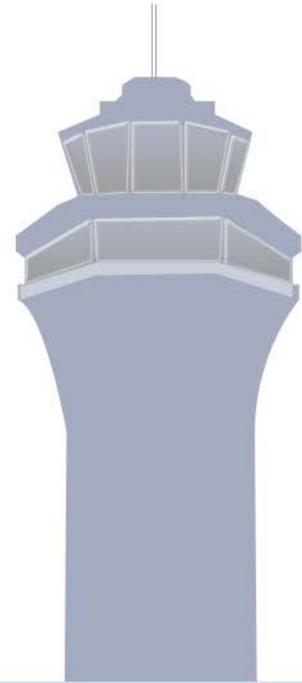
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Task and Social Functions

Teams typically perform:

- Task functions
- Social functions





Stages of Group Development

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Task Functions

Task functions help a team accomplish their work.

When task functions break down, the team will become ineffective and this will usually cause the social functions to break down as well.

Task functions include:

- Arranging and attending meetings
- Setting direction and goals
- Organizing work and materials
- Collecting and analyzing information
- Making decisions





Stages of Group Development

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Social Functions

Social functions help improve team chemistry.

When social functions break down, team members will dislike or distrust each other and ultimately team performance will go down.

Social functions include:

- Helping each other
- Breaking tension and resolving conflicts
- Encouraging and supporting each other
- Expressing feelings
- Recognizing or rewarding accomplishments





Stages of Group Development

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The Team Performance Curve

The storming stage is a necessary step for group growth.

- Storming is the stage in group development which feels uncomfortable because conflicts often emerge and team performance may drop.
- However, groups that successfully work through the storming stage go on to become effective teams.





Characteristics of Effective Teams

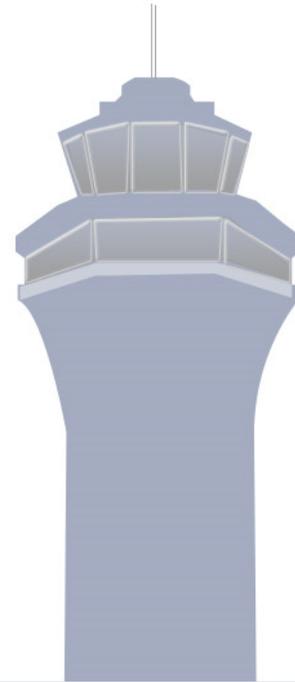
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Introduction

There are four key characteristics of effective teams:

- They have a common purpose, goal, and approach.
- The individual roles and responsibilities are clear.
- Team members have developed trust in each other.
- Team members have a way to receive feedback about their performance.





Characteristics of Effective Teams

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Common Purpose

A common purpose acts like "glue" to hold the team together.

- Without a common purpose, team members may work toward different outcomes without knowing that is what they are doing.

The purpose of the ATC team is to provide a safe, expeditious flow of traffic.





Characteristics of Effective Teams

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Common Goals

Goals help motivate the team and provide a framework for making decisions.

- Challenging goals can motivate the group to work harder and exercise more care in decisions.
- Goals help the team focus their efforts. Team members may ask, "Does this decision or course of action support our goals?"
- Goals make feedback meaningful by providing a benchmark to compare progress or achievement.

In ATC, common team goals include providing error-free services to pilots.





Characteristics of Effective Teams

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Common Approach

A common approach serves as a map or guide for the team in how it accomplishes its work.

◦ **Example:**

- An engineering team follows an engineering design process.
- A construction crew follows a set of architectural plans.
- A team of psychologists follows a research plan.

In ATC, procedures outlined in FAA Orders, such as the 7110.65 and others, define a common approach for controllers working as a team.





Characteristics of Effective Teams

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Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Often, when a team is first formed, the team members' roles are not clear and must be defined.

Roles can be established many ways:

- Dictated by the expertise, characteristics, or skills of each individual
 - Example: A basketball team
- Determined by representation
 - Example: A school board

On some teams, the team members must sort out for themselves what role each person will play.

In ATC, roles are determined by the position the controller is working and specific responsibilities that go with that position.

Generally, in ATC there are no "hard and fast" roles and responsibilities. You will have to determine these with others at your facility.





Characteristics of Effective Teams

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Team Members Trust Each Other

Trust is developed over time by:

- Accepting responsibility and being reliable. Do at least your fair share, more if necessary. Do what you say you will do.
- Maintaining a positive attitude
- Being honest, open, and listening to others
- Being flexible to adjust to changing needs of the team
- Learning to deal with difficult issues without becoming defensive, personalizing issues, or blaming others
- Supporting your team members

Trust creates a constructive climate.





Characteristics of Effective Teams

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Performance Feedback

The team must have a way of knowing how they are doing.

- Performance feedback tells the team how they are doing in relation to their goals.
- Feedback should indicate what the team does well and what needs improvement.
- Individuals need to know how they are doing in relation to the team.
- Team members should be able to give each other feedback about what is working well and what needs to change.
- In ATC, performance feedback is provided through technical training discussions.



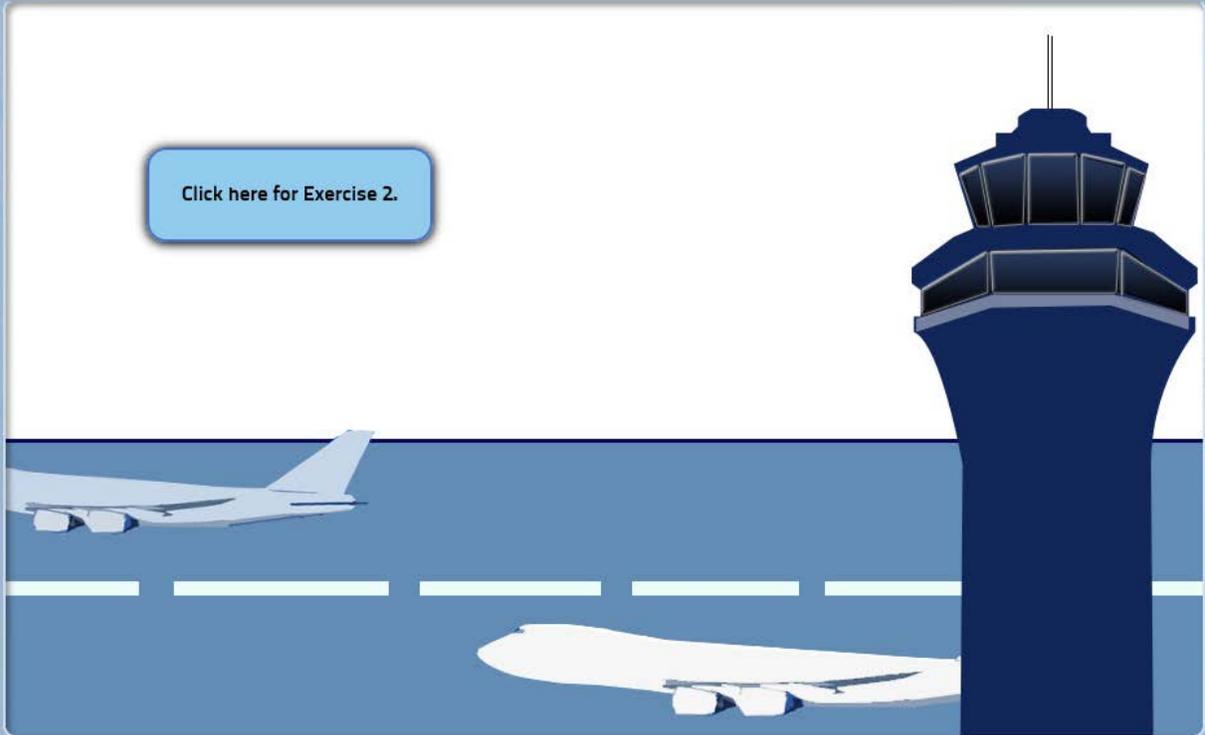


Exercise 2: Negotiation

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[Click here for Exercise 2.](#)





Team Functions

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Important Functions

Some important functions performed by teams can determine how effective they will be.

- **Communication** - Communication among members is clear and does not stimulate defensiveness
- **Conflict management** - Conflicts are resolved quickly and constructively without breaking down team member relationships
- **Decision-making** - Decisions are sound and all team members support the decisions

The next topics communication, conflict management, and decision-making involve interpersonal skills and behavior.

- Each individual's skills and behaviors in these areas will vary. For some, these skills come naturally. Others must work at them.
- Because they are personal, it may be useful to think about improvement in any of these areas in terms of a model for behavior change.





Team Functions

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Behavioral Change

STAGE	CHARACTERISTICS	STIMULATES A MOVE TO THE NEXT STAGE
Unconsciously incompetent	Behavior is automatic. We are generally unaware of what we are doing or problems we may be creating.	Getting feedback
Consciously incompetent	Behavior is automatic, but we are aware of what works well and what creates problems.	Make a choice to change and identify new skills or behaviors
Consciously competent	Behavior is consciously controlled, but slow. We must remind ourselves of what to do differently and monitor consequences closely.	Practice
Unconsciously competent	New behavior is automatic. We may or may not choose to monitor the consequences.	N/A

Behavior Change Model

This model describes four stages of behavior change. The choice to change always rests with the individual.

This model points out the value of feedback in developing more effective interpersonal skills. If we don't get feedback (or don't pay attention to it when we get it) we remain unconsciously incompetent.



Communication

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Communication Definition

Communication is any verbal or nonverbal behavior that is perceived by another person. Effective communication occurs when the individual on the receiving end of a message interprets the message in the same way the sender intended.





Communication

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NEXT

Communication is necessary to...

EXCHANGE
INFORMATION



LEARN ABOUT
ONE ANOTHER

MAKE
DECISIONS



COORDINATE
ACTION

Importance of Communication

Communication is important because it is the basis for all human interaction and all team functioning.



Communication

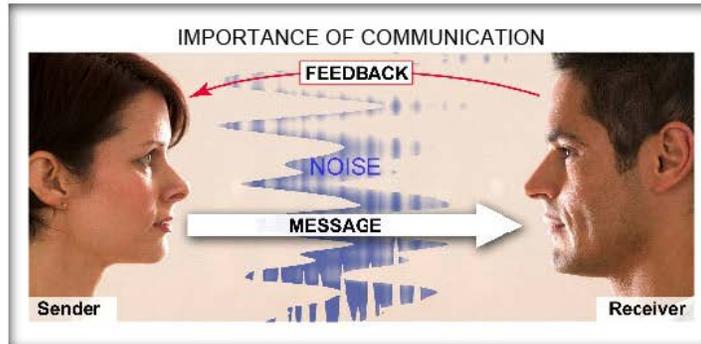
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Importance of Communication

Communication consists of:

- Sender
- Receiver
- Message
- Feedback, which confirms the message was received accurately
- Noise, which is anything that interferes with the message





Communication

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Communication in Groups

There are things you can do to make your communication effective.

- Make your messages complete and specific.
 - Include all necessary information.
 - If you are stating a conclusion or opinion, explain how you arrived at it.
- Maintain good eye contact, posture, and body language. People usually pay more attention to nonverbal signals.
 - Make frequent eye contact (not staring or glaring) with others when speaking or listening.
 - Attempt to maintain the same posture when you communicate with other team members. This communicates equality.
 - Good body language includes the following:
 - Lean toward the speaker to express interest.
 - Face the speaker squarely, right shoulder to left shoulder.
 - Maintain an open position, arms and legs uncrossed.
 - Maintain a distance of 3 to 4 feet. Getting closer than 18 inches may feel to others like you have invaded their personal area (0 to 18 inches).
 - Cultures differ in what is proper eye contact and the distance that should be maintained.





Communication

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Communication in Groups

Check on how your messages are being received.

- One of the most common ways of doing this is to ask, "Does this make sense?" or "Does anyone have any questions?"
- If the person is not paying attention, ask if there is a better time to talk.
- When you are not sure you are being understood, tell people, "I'm not sure I'm coming across clearly."

Listen actively.

- Most people retain only 25% of what they hear. They may be thinking ahead or just daydreaming.
- People also anticipate what is going to be said, which leads to errors.
- To listen actively means you:
 - Avoid interrupting.
 - Don't permit yourself to be distracted and avoid distracting others.
 - Don't dominate the discussion.
 - Give feedback letting the person know you have heard them.
 - Ask questions when you are unsure of what was said.



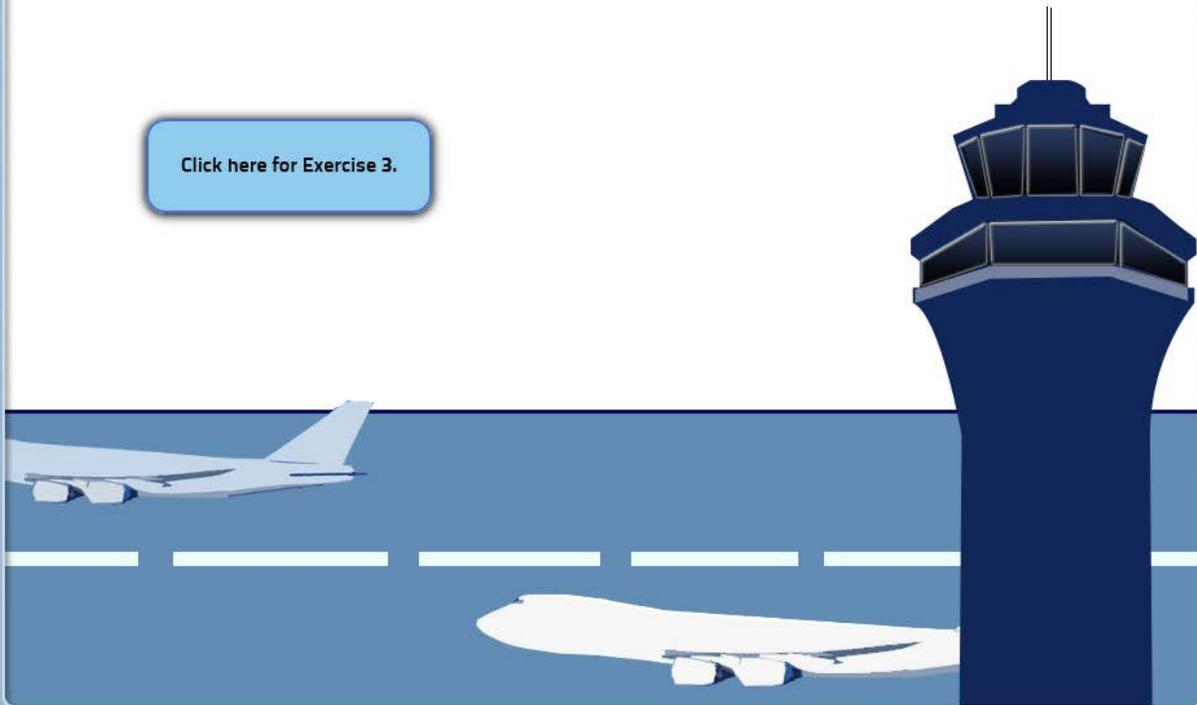


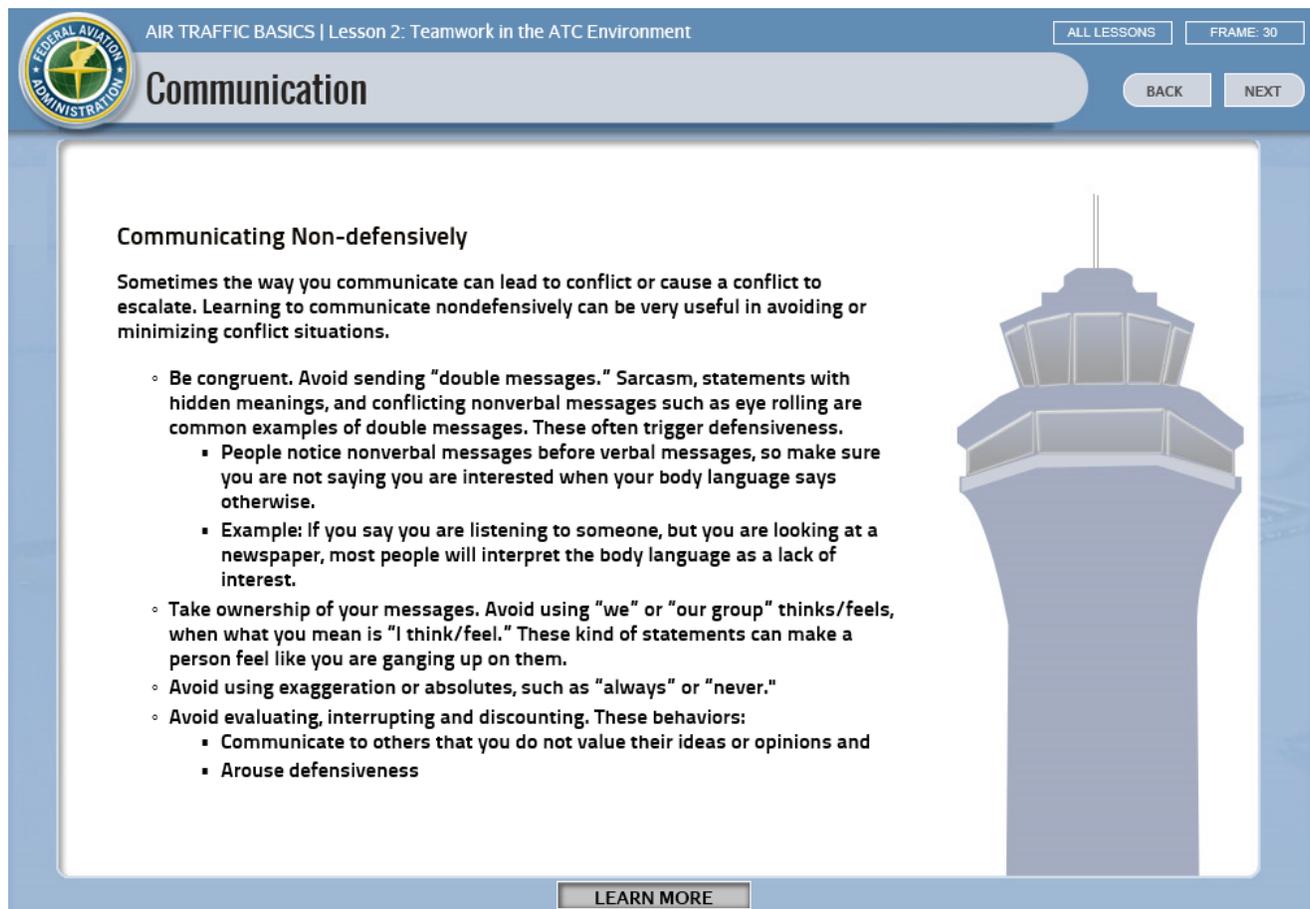
Exercise 3: Listening Self-Assessment

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[Click here for Exercise 3.](#)





Communication

Communicating Non-defensively

Sometimes the way you communicate can lead to conflict or cause a conflict to escalate. Learning to communicate nondefensively can be very useful in avoiding or minimizing conflict situations.

- **Be congruent.** Avoid sending "double messages." Sarcasm, statements with hidden meanings, and conflicting nonverbal messages such as eye rolling are common examples of double messages. These often trigger defensiveness.
 - People notice nonverbal messages before verbal messages, so make sure you are not saying you are interested when your body language says otherwise.
 - Example: If you say you are listening to someone, but you are looking at a newspaper, most people will interpret the body language as a lack of interest.
- **Take ownership of your messages.** Avoid using "we" or "our group" thinks/feels, when what you mean is "I think/feel." These kind of statements can make a person feel like you are ganging up on them.
- **Avoid using exaggeration or absolutes, such as "always" or "never."**
- **Avoid evaluating, interrupting and discounting.** These behaviors:
 - Communicate to others that you do not value their ideas or opinions and
 - Arouse defensiveness

[LEARN MORE](#)

Ask open-ended questions that express interest and allow people to explain, rather than questions that require a simple "yes or no" response or questions that express judgment.

Example:

- **Open-ended:** Could you say more about how your idea would work?
- **Closed-ended:** Do you really think your idea will work?

Focus on the message rather than the person. Try to separate your feelings about the person from the discussion of difficult topics.



Conflict Management

BACK

NEXT

Suppressing or Avoiding Conflict

Suppressing conflict makes the team members temporarily feel more comfortable, but hinders group development by:

- Limiting the information available to the group by hiding concerns or objections
- Limiting the group's ability to learn to deal with differences
- Undermining the commitment and satisfaction group members will have with the decisions they make, thus hindering implementation





Conflict Management



Conflict

Conflicts are inevitable in teams. They may revolve around:

- Differences in information or perceptions of a situation
- Differing goals, expectations, or needs
- Scarce resources or competition among individuals
- Change or resistance to change
- Power struggles
- Differences in values
- Personality conflicts

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION AIR TRAFFIC BASICS | Lesson 2: Teamwork in the ATC Environment

ALL LESSONS FRAME: 33

Conflict Management

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Methods of Managing Conflict

Allow adequate time to discuss issues.

Focus on the issues, not the people.

- Once a group begins to focus on personalities rather than the issue, people become defensive and the ability and willingness of the group to deal with a conflict decreases quickly.

Focus on interests, not positions.

- Some conflicts can be resolved simply by understanding the interests different people are pursuing. Focusing on positions tends to create win/lose situations.

Manage your own emotions.

- When feeling emotional, take time to cool down first.

Try to understand the other person's point of view.

- The single most powerful behavior in avoiding interpersonal conflict is to listen to others respectfully and without judgment so they know they have been heard and understood.

Be willing to explain your point of view.

Seek "win/win" solutions - collaborate.

- When you present an idea to your team, remember, the idea no longer belongs to you, it belongs to the team. Let the team assess or modify the idea as necessary.
- Help your team modify or combine from all ideas to get the best solution and meet everyone's interests.



LEARN MORE

Recognize that you have choices in how you respond to conflict situations.

- There are different conflict management styles.
- To be effective in a variety of conflict situations, an individual must be able to choose and use the best style for the situation.



Conflict Management

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NEXT

Use of Conflict Management Styles

Remember that you have choices during a conflict in the way you respond:

- **Competing** - Use to protect yourself against others who might take advantage of you, in a crisis, or when an unpopular, but necessary decision must be made.
- **Collaborating** - Use to gain commitment from others on a decision, to work through hard feelings, or when an integrative solution is necessary.
- **Compromising** - Use to gain a temporary settlement, particularly if time is short or the issue moderately important. Use when two parties with equal power have opposing goals.
- **Avoiding** - Use when the issue is unimportant or when others can address the issue more effectively. Can be used to gain time to deal with the situation or allow people to cool down.
- **Accommodating** - Use when you realize you are wrong or you see a better solution, when the issue is more important to the other person, or to build good will with others.





Exercise 4: Conflict Management Styles

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Decision Making

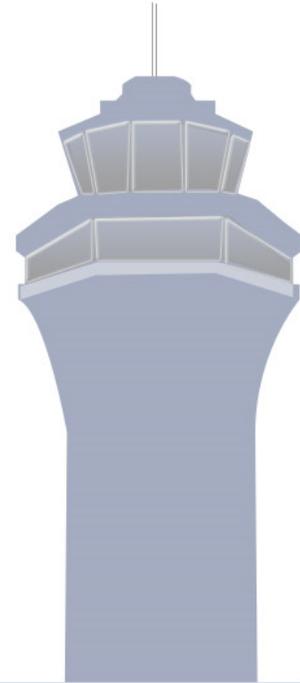
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Decision Making Styles

There are several different styles of decision making possible in teams.

- **Authoritarian** - One person makes the decision for the group
- **Majority Vote** - More than half of the team supports the decision
- **Consensus** - All team members agree with a group decision or at least can accept the decision





Decision Making

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Advantages of Consensus Decision-Making

- Involves all team members
- Helps a team find a collaborative solution
- Creates greater commitment to the decision
- Tends to produce higher quality decisions





Decision Making

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When to Use Consensus Decision Making

Use consensus decision making when:

- Multiple perspectives or points of view are needed
- High levels of commitment are required
- Adequate time for discussion is available

In ATC, there is not sufficient time for consensus decision making. However, there is adequate time for consensus when dealing with many staff and managerial responsibilities.





Decision Making

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NEXT

How to Use Consensus Decision Making

Consensus decision making works best when:

- People view differences in opinion as helpful
- There is time to form an opinion and explain it to others
- People are willing to listen to all opinions, explanations, and concerns
- Several ideas can be considered and possibly combined or modified before making a final decision





Professionalism

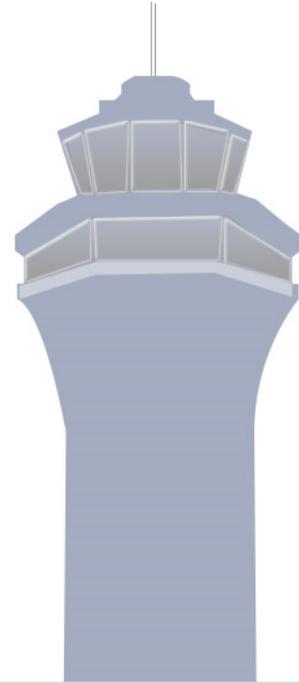
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ATC Code

- A Professional Air Traffic Controller's performance and actions are a demonstration of his or her personal commitment to safety, excellence, and upholding his or her oath to the public trust, most specifically to the users of the National Airspace System. They shall conduct themselves in a manner that instills trust and merits the confidence bestowed on them by the public they serve.
- A Professional Air Traffic Controller, through his or her own conduct and performance, should inspire, motivate, and provide examples of professionalism to others. The safety of the airspace system is of the greatest importance and their performance should always demonstrate the highest standard of excellence.
- A Professional Air Traffic Controller accepts that his or her actions represent the conduct and character of all members of the profession. They shall act in a manner that brings honor and respect to the profession, establishes public trust, and sets a global standard for excellence.

NATCA Professional Standards Program Brochure





Professionalism

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The Professional Standards Program

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), with the support of the FAA, has implemented a Professional Standards Program that:

- Is a peer-to-peer program designed to address issues of professionalism at the lowest level
- Encourages a more professional working environment
- Demonstrates a commitment to safety and excellence
- Allows the air traffic control workforce to provide the highest level of professionalism to uphold the public trust



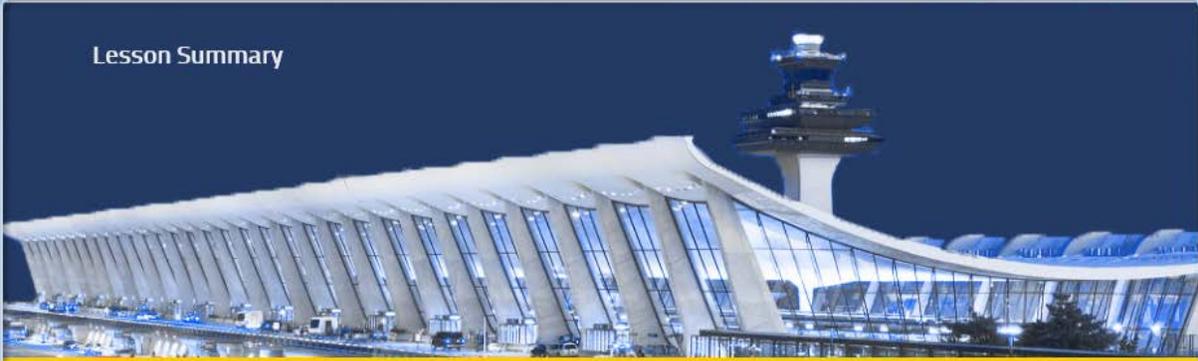


Conclusion

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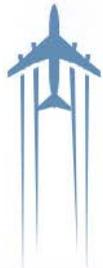
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Lesson Summary



This lesson covered:

- Teams
- Stages of Group Development
- Characteristics of Effective Teams
- Team Functions
- Communication
- Conflict Management
- Decision Making





Resources

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[Click here to access all the Appendices for Lesson 2.](#)

