

Professional skills course

Interpersonal Skills Module

Delegate pack

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

This course has been developed to provide you with better interpersonal skills as you embark on your career. Effective interpersonal skills are a pre-requisite to becoming a fully effective finance professional. The course has been specifically developed to support your progress towards the ACCA Qualification and to count towards the achievement of ACCA's practical experience requirements (PER), which are mandatory for ACCA membership.

ACCA PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

As an ACCA member, you will need to be equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to meet different challenges in your career. ACCA's practical experience requirement (PER) enables you to apply the knowledge gained through your exams, and develop the skills attitudes and behaviours that you will need to demonstrate as a qualified accountant. PER provides a framework for achievement, confirming effective and sustainable workplace performance, making you a more valuable employee.

Below you will find a guide to where this course is most relevant to specific performance objectives.

It should be noted that attendance on this course will not automatically result in achievement of the performance objective. ACCA would expect you to actively demonstrate the performance objective in the workplace.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE	HOW WILL EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS BE USED IN ACHIEVING THE PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE?
Number 2 Contribute to the effective governance of an organisation	The individual must be able to provide accurate information to senior management and/or decision-making bodies in their organisation.
Number 4 Manage self	The individual must be able to work effectively with other people from their own and other organisations.
Number 5 Communicate effectively	The individual needs to clearly communicate with colleagues at all levels, minimise barriers to effective communication and convey information in a way that others will understand.
Number 7 Manage on-going activities in your area of responsibility	The individual needs to manage day-to-day activities in their area of responsibility. If they work in a team they must be competent in allocating work to other colleagues.
Number 9 Manage an assignment	The individual needs to communicate progress of the assignment and end results to relevant people.
Number 13 Contribute to budget planning and production	The individual needs to contribute to the process of planning budgets, negotiating with other stakeholders and communicating agreed budgets.
Number 14 Monitor and control budgets	The individual needs to analyse variations between budget and actual figures and communicate their findings to appropriate people.
Number 15 Evaluate potential business/investment opportunities	Evaluate potential business opportunities and the required finance options.
Number 17 Prepare for and collect evidence for audit	The individual needs to understand the nature of the client's organisation and its areas of operation. There will be a need to communicate effectively with the organisation and use effective interpersonal skills to obtain the information required.
Number 18 Evaluate and report on audit	The individual must evaluate and report on statutory audits, internal reviews or investigations and report on findings to management, requiring effective interpersonal skills.
Number 20 Assist with tax planning	In assisting with tax planning activities, the individual will need to discuss initiatives with internal stakeholders or external tax authorities and discuss tax liabilities and issues arising, requiring effective interpersonal skills.

OUTLINE PROGRAMME

Introduction and welcome

- Setting the scene
- Why are we concerned with interpersonal relationships and teams?

Increasing self awareness

- Johari Window

How people communicate

- Psychology of human behaviour
- Transactional analysis

Reflection and learning

INTRODUCTION

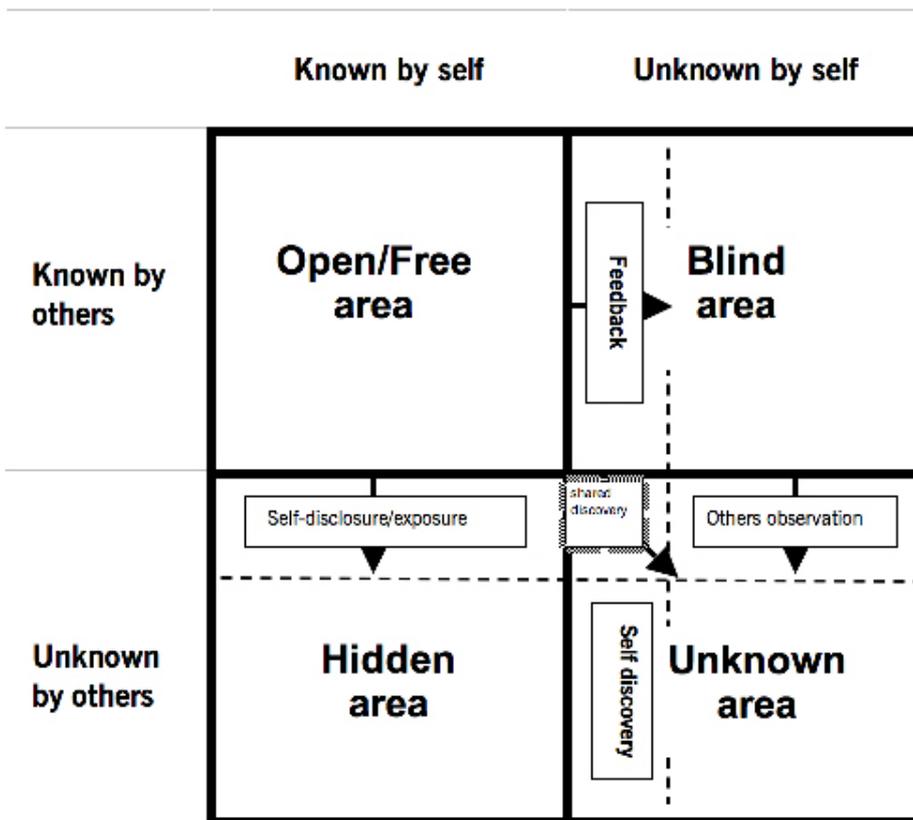
In all areas of business we need to deal with others; whether as managers, colleagues, members of a team or as subordinates. How well we manage these relationships and our interaction with others can have a huge impact on how effective we are in our work and how motivated we are.

Putting it another way, we spend a significant portion of our life interacting with other people and the better we can make these interactions, the more fulfilled we will be both at work and in our personal lives.

JOHARI WINDOW

An essential part of improving your interpersonal skills is the need to understand yourself and others better.

The Johari Window model is a simple and useful tool for illustrating and improving self-awareness, and mutual understanding between individuals.



The Johari Window has four areas. Each of these areas contains and represents the information – feelings, motivation, etc – known about the person, in terms of whether the information is known or unknown by the person, and whether the information is known or unknown by others in the group.

Area 1

What is known by the person about him/herself and is also known by others – open area or ‘the arena’

The aim in any interpersonal relationship is to develop the ‘open area’ for every person, because when we work in this area with others we are at our most effective and productive, and the group is at its most productive too.

The open/free area, or ‘the arena’, can be seen as the space where good communication and co-operation occur free from distractions, mistrust, confusion, conflict and misunderstanding.

Area 2

The blind area or blind spot is what is known about a person by others in the group, but is unknown by the person him/herself. By seeking or soliciting feedback from others, the aim should be to reduce this area and thereby to increase the open area, eg to increase self-awareness.

This blind area is not an effective or productive space for individuals or groups. This blind area could also be referred to as ignorance about oneself, or issues in which one is deluded. A blind area could also include issues that others are deliberately withholding from a person. We all know how difficult it is to work well when kept in the dark. No-one works well when subject to 'mushroom management'. People who are 'thick-skinned' tend to have a large blind area. By seeking feedback we can reduce the blind area and increase the open arena (see dotted line on the diagram).

Area 3

What the person knows about him/herself that others do not know is called the hidden area or 'façade'.

This hidden or avoided self represents information, feelings and anything that a person knows about himself, but which is not revealed or is kept hidden from others. The hidden area could also include sensitivities, fears, hidden agendas, manipulative intentions, secrets and anything that a person knows but does not reveal, for whatever reason.

It is natural for very personal and private information and feelings to remain hidden. Indeed certain information, feelings and experiences have no bearing on work and so can, and should, remain hidden. However, typically a lot of hidden information is not very personal, it is work- or performance-related and so is better positioned in the open area.

By moving relevant hidden information and feelings, etc, into the open area through the process of 'disclosure' we again increase the open arena.

Area 4

What is unknown by the person about him/herself and is also unknown by others lies in the fourth area called the unknown area or unknown self.

These unknown issues take a variety of forms: they can be feelings, behaviours, attitudes, capabilities, aptitudes, which can be quite close to the surface, and which can be positive and useful. Alternatively, they can be deeper aspects of an individual's personality that influence his/her behaviour to various degrees. Large unknown areas would typically be expected in younger people, and people who lack experience or self-belief.

Again, as with disclosure and soliciting feedback, the process of self discovery is a sensitive one. The extent and depth to which an individual is able to seek out and discover their unknown feelings must always be at their own discretion. Some people are more keen and able than others to do this.

HOW PEOPLE COMMUNICATE

All the feelings and experiences that people are exposed to during infancy and childhood are unconsciously recorded in the brain. These recorded messages greatly influence our behaviour for the rest of our lives. (Penfield 1951).

These are observable as three distinct modes of behaviour, called ego states, which considerably affect our style of communication and its effectiveness (Eric Berne 1958). These three ego states are within us all the time. When we act, speak or make gestures that are influenced by our parents' behaviour, we are acting from our 'Parent'.

The 'Child' within us influences emotions and spontaneous behaviour.

The 'Adult' state collects and organises information, predicts the consequences of various actions and makes decisions.

Everybody has three ego states:

- Parent is our 'taught' concept of life
- Adult is our 'thought' concept of life
- Child is our 'felt' concept of life.

Parent

The Parent in you feels and behaves in the same way you perceived the feelings and behaviours of your mother and father (or other influential grown-ups) when you were a baby. You express a Parent ego state when you:

- give advice
- criticise
- discipline
- moralise
- nurture and protect
- make rules and regulations
- teach
- judge.

Adult

Your Adult ego state helps you gather factual information and use it to make rational decisions. It is not related to age and using the Adult ego state can increase a person's potential for success. You use your Adult ego state when you:

- store information
- plan
- check alternatives
- make decisions
- reason
- recall information
- evaluate
- estimate probabilities
- set limits.

Child

The Child ego state contains impulses and responses you felt and made when you were very young. Besides spontaneous feelings, Child is the origin of adapted behaviour. The Child ego state is not related to age and is observable when you show:

- fear
- anger
- rebelliousness
- curiosity
- creativity
- trust
- love
- excitement
- self-indulgence
- aggression
- servility.

Most people are unaware of these ego states. Yet all human communication is made to and from Parent, Adult or Child. By becoming aware, and learning to recognise the Parent, Adult and Child behaviours in ourselves and others, we can greatly improve the quality of communications.

ANALYSING TRANSACTIONS

A transaction is defined as the basic unit of communication. It consists of a stimulus (usually a verbal statement) and the response to it. Conversations are made up of chains of transactions, each of which can be independently analysed.

Awareness of these transactions and the ego states involved can greatly assist in the smooth flow of conversation, thus lessening the possibility of communication breakdown and improving communication effectiveness.

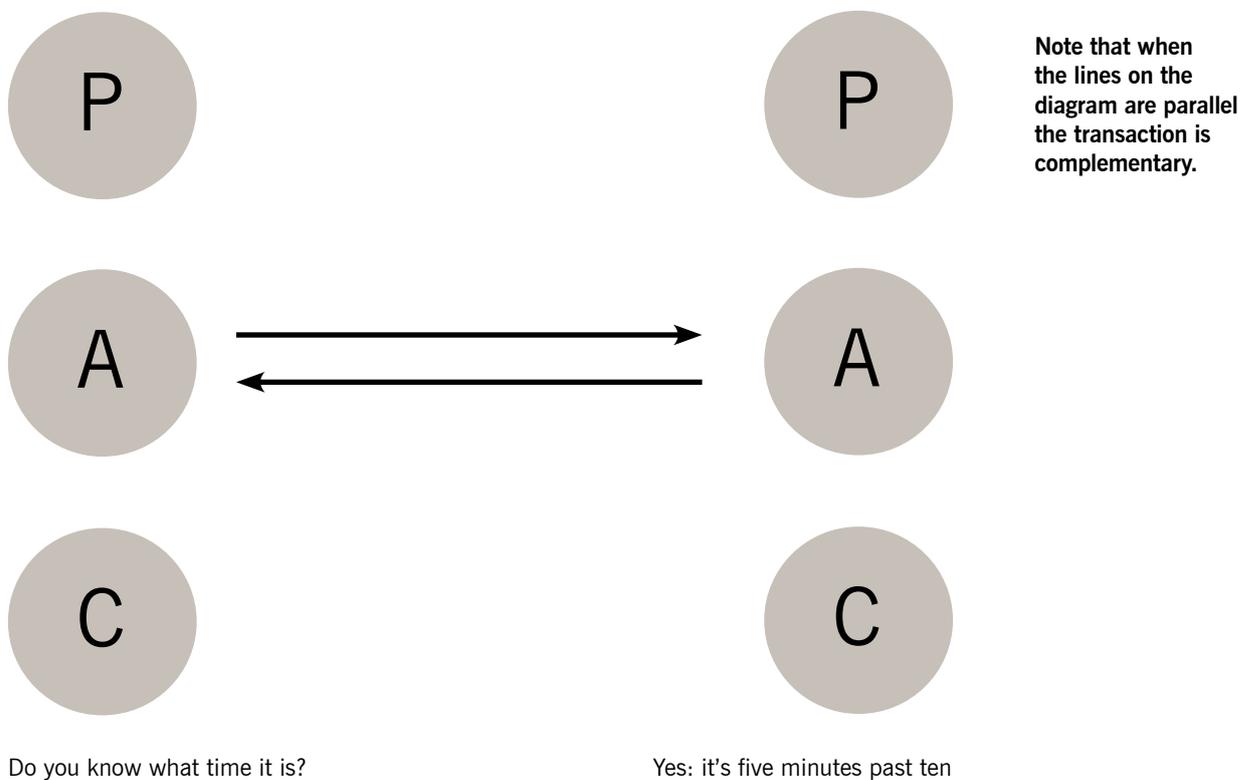
It is possible to recognise and classify transactions into three basic types:

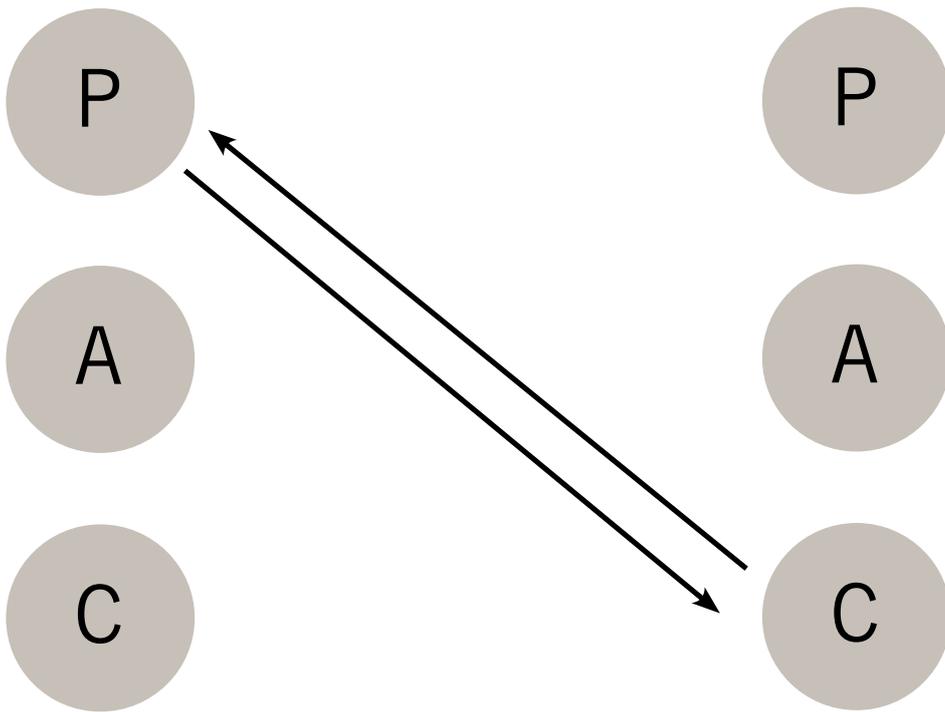
- complementary
- crossed
- ulterior.

Complementary transactions

When the response to a stimulus comes from the ego state to which it was directed, the transaction is Complementary. Complementary transactions are the basis of smooth communication and, as long as the transactions remain complementary, communication will continue undisturbed.

It is possible to depict transactions in the following manner:





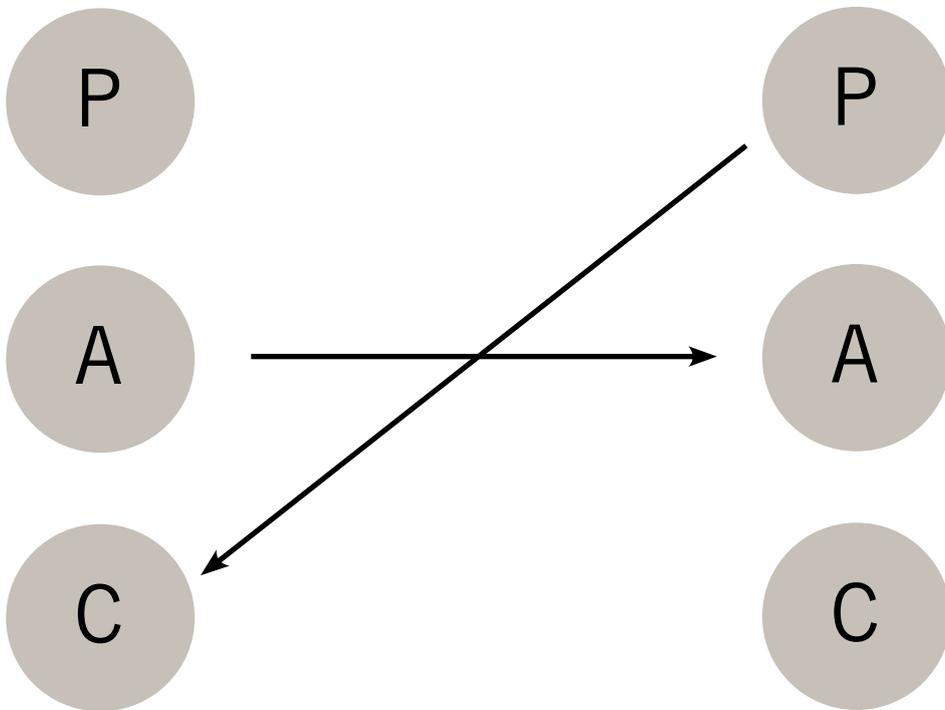
Note that when the lines on the diagram are parallel the transaction is complementary.

You're late; it's not good enough.

I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

Crossed transactions

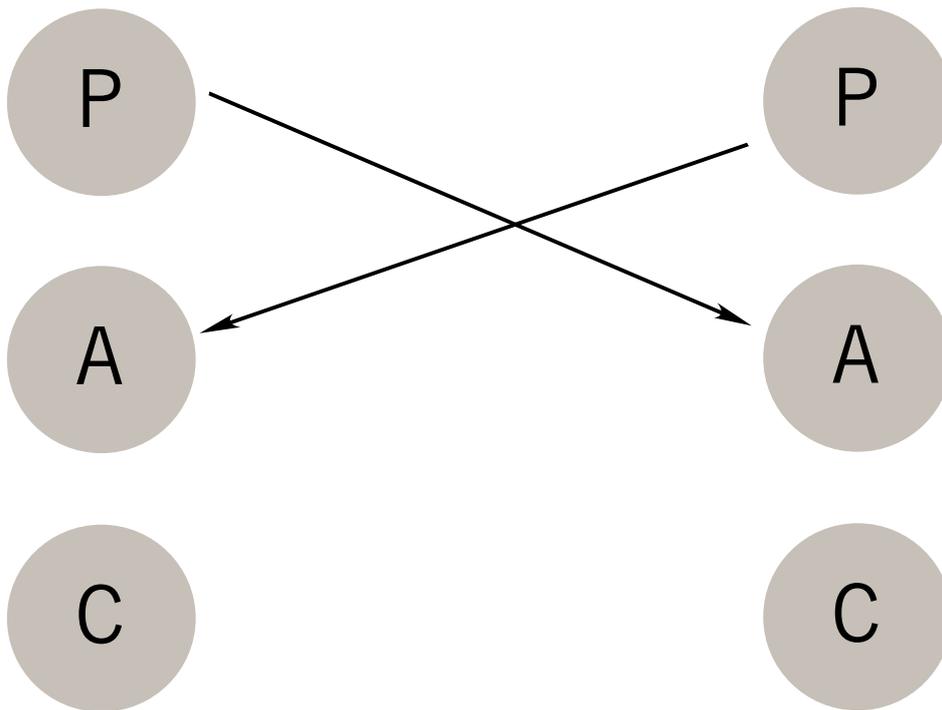
When the response to a stimulus comes from an ego state other than the expected one, the transaction is crossed. At this point communication is broken until such time as one or other of the speakers alters his/her ego state.



The lines on the following diagrams are not parallel.

Do you know what the time is?

It's time you bought yourself a watch.

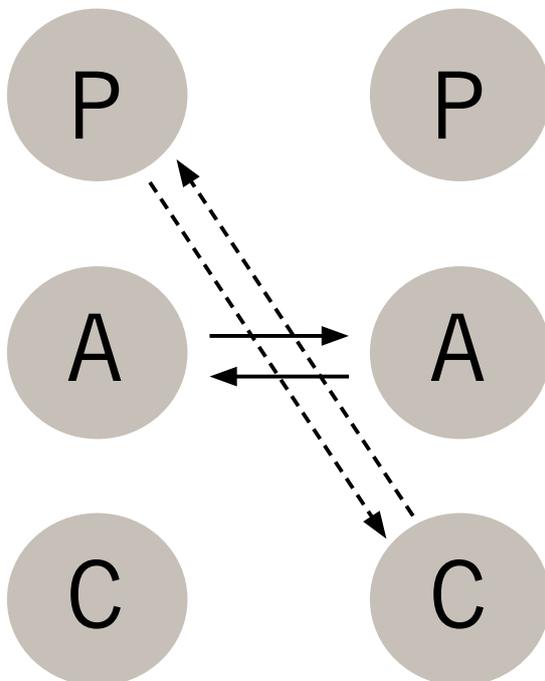


You're late again it's not good enough.

You can't talk. You don't set a very good example.

Ulterior (or hidden) transaction

These occur when the spoken words contain a hidden message; when a person says one thing and means something else.



Spoken message from manager to subordinate who is one hour late:

'What's the time?'

(Hidden message: 'You're very late!')

Spoken reply:

'It's five minutes to four.'

(Hidden message: 'I feel very guilty.')

Breakdown occurs when the responder fails (or refuses) to recognise the unspoken message. A response to the unspoken message is often the beginning of a psychological game.

If we can recognise what ego state the person with whom we are in communication is in, we can choose our response so as to have a complementary transaction.

The Adult state is the one which, as previously described, deals with the rational, decision making and reasonable argument. On the whole, our communication is more effective when we transact from our Adult ego state.

Even more interesting is the observation that people have a preference as to what state they would rather communicate in.

Consider the difference between someone who exhibits a considerable amount of their Child ego state and someone who prefers to communicate from their Parent ego state.

We need to develop the ability to identify others' ego states and then phrase our questions/responses accordingly. This takes a great deal of practice and is something that requires you to spend time observing others.

FURTHER READING

I'm OK You're OK Thomas and Amy Harris

Transactional Analysis Scripts People Live Claude Steiner.

IDENTIFYING TRANSACTIONS EXERCISE

For the following transactions show which ego state they come from.

- | | | | |
|--------------|--|---|---|
| 1. Steve: | Can you tell me where I would find the budgets? | P | P |
| Helen: | Yes, they are in the top drawer of the right hand cabinet. | A | A |
| | | C | C |
| 2. Steve: | What on earth is wrong with the sales department?
They never get anything right. | P | P |
| Helen: | I agree. They are a bunch of idiots. | A | A |
| | | C | C |
| 3. Mary: | I'll never get this right; please help me. | P | P |
| Jane: | Of course you can, let me show you. | A | A |
| | | C | C |
| 4. Manager: | What do you think the problem is? | P | P |
| Foreman: | It's the stupid purchase ledger department.
They never put the journals through properly. | A | A |
| | | C | C |
| 5. Customer: | This radio I bought here last week is useless.
The reception is appalling. | P | P |
| Assistant: | Let's have a look at it. Can you describe the problem? | A | A |
| | | C | C |

6. Fred: I give up with this work, let's go home.

Helen: What a great idea.

P

P

A

A

C

C

7. Four year old: Mummy, why is there steam when I breathe?

Mother: Wow! Perhaps you are turning into a dragon.

P

P

A

A

C

C

8. Clare: I've got such a headache. Please help me find some aspirin.

Louise: Find them yourself.

P

P

A

A

C

C