



Communication Clarity Checklist

Ensuring instructions, expectations, and timelines are ND-safe.

By Neal Glendenning

Contact: info@theneuroinclusionproject.co.uk

© 2025 Neal Glendenning / The Neuro Inclusion Project / NdCare Group.
All rights reserved.

This material may not be reproduced, distributed, adapted, or used for training, commercial, or educational purposes without prior written permission.

Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

A clear orientation (for organisations)

This is not a communication-style guide.
It is not a script for sounding warmer or more persuasive.
It is not about managing tone or personality.

This checklist exists because **unclear communication is one of the most consistent drivers of overload, anxiety, conflict, and burnout for neurodivergent (ND) staff...** and because ambiguity is often treated as neutral when it is not.

Communication clarity is not about saying more.
It is about **reducing guesswork, interpretation, and threat.**

This checklist is designed to be:

- used before sending instructions, briefs, or requests
- applied to written or verbal communication
- adopted as a shared organisational standard

It must not be used to evaluate communication “skills” or police expression.

1. Core reframe: ambiguity is cognitive load

Many organisations assume that ambiguity:

- encourages autonomy
- invites initiative
- shows trust

For ND staff, ambiguity often:

- increases anxiety
- triggers over-analysis
- delays action
- leads to misalignment

Clarity does not remove autonomy.
It **freed capacity** to use it.

2. When to use this checklist

This checklist is especially important when communicating:

- tasks or instructions

- deadlines or timelines
- feedback or expectations
- changes to plans or priorities
- requests that involve judgement or evaluation
- anything that might escalate if misunderstood

You do not need to use every item every time.
Use what reduces load **in that moment**.

3. The Communication Clarity Checklist

A. Purpose & context (before content)

Before sending or saying anything, check:

- Have I clearly stated *why* this communication exists?
- Is it obvious what this is *for* (information, input, action, decision)?
- Have I separated background context from the ask?

Ambiguity about purpose creates hesitation and overthinking.

B. The ask (what is actually needed)

Many ND difficulties arise when the ask is implied, not stated.

Check:

- Is the request explicit (not hinted or embedded)?
- Is it clear whether action is required?
- Have I avoided bundling multiple asks together?

If there are multiple actions, list them clearly.

C. Expectations & “done”

ND-safe communication makes success legible.

Confirm:

- What “done” looks like has been described
- Level of detail expected is clear
- Format or standard (if any) is specified

- Examples or references are provided where helpful

Never assume shared interpretation.

D. Timelines & urgency (critical)

Urgency is one of the biggest sources of unnecessary threat.

Check:

- Is there an actual deadline, or a preference?
- Is the deadline explicit (date/time)?
- Have I explained what happens if timing shifts?
- Have I avoided vague terms (“ASAP”, “soon”, “when you can”)?

If there is no deadline, say so.

E. Priority & sequencing

Unclear priority leads to freeze or overwork.

Check:

- Is this a top priority, or one of many?
- Does it replace or add to existing work?
- Have I clarified what can wait if capacity is limited?

ND staff often assume everything is urgent unless told otherwise.

F. Scope & boundaries

Scope creep creates chronic overload.

Check:

- What is included is clear
- What is *not* included is named (where relevant)
- Decision-making authority is clear
- Approval points are specified

Boundaries are a form of safety.

G. Communication channel & response expectations

Unclear response norms cause constant self-monitoring.

Confirm:

- Where responses should go (email, doc, chat, meeting)
- Whether a response is expected at all
- Expected response time (realistic)
- Whether follow-up will happen

Silence without context often triggers anxiety.

H. Tone & interpretation risk

ND-safe communication reduces the need to infer meaning.

Check:

- Is the tone neutral and direct?
- Have I avoided sarcasm, hints, or indirect language?
- Have I separated feedback from judgement?

Clarity beats warmth when safety is at stake.

I. Change communication (extra important)

Changes are high-risk moments for ND overload.

If something has changed:

- Have I named *what* changed explicitly?
- Have I named *what did not* change?
- Have I reset expectations and timelines?
- Have I acknowledged the impact of the change?

Never assume people will infer updates.

4. Common communication patterns that increase harm

Avoid:

- “Just a quick thing...”
- “You probably already know...”
- “Sorry to bother you...”
- “Can you quickly...”
- “Let’s play it by ear”

These phrases increase uncertainty and pressure.

5. ND-safe alternatives (copy–adapt–use)

Instead of vague phrasing, try:

- “This is for information only... no action needed.”
- “I need X by Y. If that doesn’t work, let me know.”
- “This replaces the previous request.”
- “This is lower priority than A and B.”
- “We’ll review this together... no decision yet.”

These reduce cognitive load immediately.

6. Written vs verbal communication

Whenever possible:

- follow verbal instructions with written summaries
- do not rely on memory
- allow time for processing

Written clarity is not bureaucracy.
It is **access support**.

7. What good communication clarity enables

When clarity becomes standard, organisations often see:

- faster initiation

- fewer errors
- less follow-up chasing
- reduced anxiety
- fewer conflicts
- more honest capacity conversations

These outcomes come from **removing friction**, not adding pressure.

8. How to introduce this checklist organisationally

Best practice includes:

- sharing it as a *support tool*, not a mandate
- modelling its use in leadership communication
- embedding it in templates and workflows
- encouraging partial use

If clarity is optional, ambiguity will persist.

9. Organisational guardrails (non-negotiable)

This checklist must not be used to:

- criticise communication style
- score individuals
- demand perfection
- override judgement
- police tone

Its purpose is **harm reduction**, not control.

10. A short self-check (optional)

Before sending a message, ask:

- Could someone act on this without asking follow-up questions?
- Is the priority obvious?
- Would this feel clear if I were already overloaded?
- Have I removed unnecessary ambiguity?

If not, adjust.

A closing note for organisations

Clear communication is not about efficiency.

It is about **safety**.

When instructions, expectations, and timelines are clear:

- people stop bracing
- thinking improves
- trust increases
- work flows more smoothly

ND-safe communication benefits everyone...
but for ND staff, it is often the difference between coping and thriving.

Clarity is not micromanagement.

It is **respect made visible**.

