

## TYPES OF COMMUNICATION GOALS

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Communication goals can be divided into primary and secondary goals. The primary goal is what compels you to say something in the situation, it tells what the situation is about. Imagine that you worked very hard on an essay for your English composition course only to receive a grade of "C" for your effort. You decide to discuss this grade with your English professor during her office hours. If I interrupted you during the middle of this conversation and asked "What are you trying to accomplish in this situation?" you might reply "I'm trying to get my professor to raise my grade". Persuading the professor to raise your grade is your primary goal. Both you and your professor realize that this is what the conversation is about.

Aside from primary goals people also pursue secondary goals during conversation. Secondary goals arise from concerns that are common across individual and situations. In most cases you want to avoid becoming too anxious to make a positive impression to act consistently with your values and to maintain important friendships. These secondary goals often hold you back from saying certain things, or lead you to say them with tact. For example, you want to convince your English professor to raise your grade but you also may want to keep a favorable impression in the professor's eyes, especially if you are going to have this professor for several additional classes in the future.

Here is another example. Imagine that you are attracted to another student who sits close to you in this class. You had never met this person before this class and you only have talked to him/her a few times before class. You decide to ask this person out on a date in order to get to know him/her better. You hope the person will say "yes" to your request because you will be embarrassed if he/she turns you down. Getting the person to go out with you is your primary goal, while avoiding embarrassment is your secondary goal. Notice that the primary goal motivates you to talk to the other person, while the secondary goal holds you back or leads you to say some things rather than others.

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