

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Verbal communication is made of symbols (words) which represent feelings, ideas, objects, and people.

Symbols have three qualities:

- Symbols are **arbitrary**:
 - They are not fundamentally connected to what they represent.
 - “That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.” Shakespeare *R & J*
 - Certain words seem right because as a society we agree to use them in particular ways.
 - Language changes as we invent new words.
 - Meanings change over time.

60 years ago	Today
Gay = happy	Gay = sexual orientation
Apple = fruit	Apple = computer
Mouse = furry mammal	Mouse = computer component

- Symbols are **ambiguous**:
 - They don't have clear cut, precise meanings.
 - While words don't mean exactly the same thing to everyone, there's an agreed-upon range of meaning.
 - Ambiguity leads to misunderstandings.
 - To minimize ambiguity, we should be as clear as possible when speaking w/ others.
- Symbols are **abstract**:
 - They are not concrete or tangible.
 - They stand for ideas, people, events, objects, feelings, etc. but *they are not the things they represent*.
 - As symbols get more abstract, overgeneralizations occur. This is bad.

Abstract	Reading Matter
Less Abstract	Book
Even Less Abstract	Textbook
Concrete & Specific	<i>Communication Mosaics</i> by Julia Wood