

References for Loving Communication

1. Speak softly, sweetly, without malice in your heart; speak as if you are addressing the Sai who resides in everyone

[SSS 09.09: 16-May-1969]

2. Always respect another's opinion and another's point of view. Do not start a quarrel at the slightest difference of opinion. He may be right and you may be wrong. Ponder over his argument; he might have had the advantage of knowing more about the subject or you may be prejudiced either for or against; or he may not know as much as you.

[SSS 1.24: 25-1959]

3. Understanding others is the key to adjustment

[SSS 26:26, 21-July-1993]

4. First you must understand each other. After that adjustment will be easy. First understanding. Second adjustment. Ninety percent of the people try adjustment first. This is the wrong way. First understanding.

[Visions of Sai, Rita Bruce pg. 129]

5. When the foot slips, the wound heals after a few months; when the tongue slips, the wound it causes in the heart of another will fester for life.

[SSS 1:10, 22-7-1958]

6. Speak the truth, but speak pleasantly. Simply because a statement will be welcome to the hearer, don't speak it out to win his approval; if speaking truth will cause grief or pain, keep silent.

[SSS 7.46: 20-Dec-1967]

7. The Supreme duty is refraining from causing harm to anyone. This truth is proclaimed in the scriptures in the exhortation: "Speak the truth. Speak what is pleasing (Sathyam bruyaath; priyam bruyaath.)" Thus, pleasing speech is declared as a supreme duty.

[SSS 5 February 1998]

8. When you converse with others, you should do so with respect. You should not use harsh words. "If you cannot oblige, speak obligingly," is the golden rule you should follow. When you salute others, it goes to God. When you criticise or abuse another person, that also goes to God.

[SSS 31.19: 26-April-1998]

9. Spend the day with Love, End the day with Love. This is the way to God. There are very few who publicise this message. It is not enough if you call yourself a messenger; you have to spread the divine message. Fortunate are those who pay heed to God's words. Whether people listen or not, discharge your duty of spreading His message.

[Discourse 25-12-1988]

Key Points for Effective Reporting (COMMUNICATION)

Guidelines for Articles

Why is good documentation of every service activity in the SSSIO very important? 1) It will inspire others to participate in similar service projects. 2) It is an important communication vehicle to help spread the good work being done in the SSSIO with the general public. This work is 'Love in Action' when we serve those in need. This helps us to share Sathya Sai Baba's universal message of "Love All, Serve All" and "Help Ever, Hurt Never" with everyone.

In the past, Sathya Sai Baba read through and approved all the publications that showed the good work He had inspired. He emphasized the importance of reporting all the details of each project accurately, and in a professionally laid out publication. Our reports should use language, which is understandable to the public. A story of service to those in need is inspiring to everyone.

- Focus on service, event, and people – facts, figures, and reports of activities
- Short Summary: include location, venue, activity date, no. of volunteers/youth, no. of people served, and other important facts
- Include awards, honours, and comments from dignitaries, volunteers, and also the people we served.
- Do NOT assume reader is familiar with local conditions, people, needs, climate, etc.
- Use neutral language for public (e.g. volunteers instead of sevakas or devotees)
- Be brief: 100 to 300 words, usually

Guidelines for Pictures

Pictures and other audio-visual material are very important to tell the story and inspire others. Try to have good quality photos that tell the story of each service project. The photos should show the activity being done, rather than posed photos. Label each photo with the proper caption, and ensure that they meet all the legal and formal requirements.

- Ensure pictures relate to story and complement it
- Reference pictures in text, (e.g. "Retreat in Trinidad on 13th January 2023")
- Ensure pictures meet legal, technical requirements and are properly identified (see below)

Technical Requirements

- Recommend using digital SLR or good-quality compact camera – use mobile phone (Smart phone with high mega pixel) if camera is not available
- Check Camera for Focus – Lighting – High Resolution (4 MP or higher)
- Do NOT put date or place stamp on picture
- Show what is being done
- Show audience, activity, and volunteers/devotees (Happy Participants)
- Show multiple individuals vs. focusing on a single person
- Include multiple pictures for all aspects of the event/activity
- Include banners or signs of the event/activity

Legal Requirements

- Observe laws for publishing pictures in the country of the event/activity
- Obtain appropriate permission to take pictures, as per legal requirements (e.g., for medical camp, registration form can have appropriate language)
- If a professional photographer is used, ensure that SSSIO has full legal right to pictures

Guidelines for Submitting Articles & Pictures

- Plan Ahead: identify stories, events, programmes every Quarter
- Assign volunteer to (1) Collect facts, figures, and stories; (2) Take **action pictures** (4MP or higher)
- Review pictures and select best ones for submittal
- Put caption on each picture (file)
- Folder Name: **Country-Date** (Mexico -2022 Feb)
- Send Link to Picture Folder and Word File (.docx) with article
- Submit article & photos within 30 days of event

Some Websites where Reports Appear

- SSSIO official website (www.sathyasai.org)
- Sai Universe (saiuniverse.sathyasai.org)
- Sathya Sai Humanitarian Relief (sathyasaihumanitarianrelief.org)
- Sai Love in Action (sailoveinaction.org)

Key Points for Effective and Loving Communication

Skills	Techniques and Examples	Benefits
Before Speaking Understand by Listening Carefully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause before speaking . . . and remember: To realise “I am speaking to God”. This takes constant practice. Even under the most difficult circumstances, remember the divinity in others. • “First understanding, then adjustment”: Listen carefully and patiently to better understand what is being said and also what emotion is being felt by the speaker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be happy when we remember we are speaking to God, and we will automatically smile and speak with much more love, reverence, humility, patience, respect, and compassion. • The person we are listening to will appreciate our undivided attention, and when we check for understanding by summarising what we have heard and felt, this helps avoid misunderstandings.
A Positive No Showing Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly”: “I wish I could do” “What I can do is” • “Yes, and . . .” versus “Yes, but . . .” shows respect for others’ opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all appreciate being spoken to in a kind and loving manner, even if we don’t get what we want. • “Yes, and . . .” shows respect, acknowledges another’s opinion, is nonjudgmental, and encourages the exchange of ideas. This helps communication in study circles, brainstorming at work, and in daily conversations with all we meet.
Handling Different Viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen patiently without interrupting, to practice “first understanding, then adjustment.” This involves active listening. • Express empathy: “That sounds frustrating.” “I am sorry to hear that.” • Summarise what we have heard. • Validate others’ viewpoints: “From what you have told me, I can see why you feel this is correct” • “And, I’d like to share my perspective.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening patiently to others and summarising what they are saying and feeling shows we care about and respect their viewpoints, even if different than our own. Communicating with love and respect, and validating the others’ viewpoints, will help us work through differences of opinion.
E-mail tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never try to work out differences of opinion via e-mail. Instead, meet in person or call via Skype or phone to resolve different viewpoints. • Do not say anything negative about another person in any e-mail. • Subject line matching content in email: If the content in a chain of e-mail changes, change the subject line to match the current content. • Do not share e-mail contact lists: use BCC for large e-mail lists • Attention to details matters: Make sure e-mails contain a clear subject line, short and precise content with few bullet points. If responding to another email, we should address all items. • Remember to copy those who need to know and do not copy those who do not need to know. • Remember to attach documents and pictures when we say, “See attached document.” • Be careful about hitting the “Reply All” button. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to resolve conflicts or different viewpoints via e-mail almost always makes things worse. We have a much better chance by speaking to the other person via Skype, phone, or in person. • Saying something negative about another person is criticising God. E-mail is also a permanent record, may circulate worldwide, and could be forwarded to a person we have criticised. This may hurt the person’s feelings. Swami has said it is our supreme duty to not cause any injury or harm to others. • Always protect and avoid sharing others’ contact information. It is okay to share within a small group who already know each other and are working together on a project. Not sharing the e-mail addresses of large groups of people helps prevent a number of future problems. • Keeping e-mails short, yet including all the pertinent information, helps everyone who receives our e-mails. Having a subject line that matches the content of the e-mail will help everyone search for and find the e-mails on that topic.

Skills	Techniques and Examples	Benefits
E-mail tips (contd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be formal and use a proper e-mail signature including our position or service role in the SSSIO. • Use one e-mail address for SSSIO e-mails and use an organisation e-mail address when available. • Do not send an e-mail if angry or upset. • Remember Who we are sending each e-mail to: Which is the Divinity that resides in each person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other details such as attaching pictures and documents when we say we will, and using appropriate e-mail addresses, titles, and proper formality for official SSSIO e-mails are important details for all who serve in the SSSIO.
Talking about Sri Sathya Sai Baba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For friends, colleagues, and small groups: best to speak about His teachings, life, and the service projects He has inspired. It is also good to speak about how practising His universal teachings has helped with one's own personal improvement. For example, "I have become a better person by knowing Him and practising His teachings. I now experience the most joy when I am serving or helping others." Or share about His teachings • For public meetings or speaking to the media, ask, "Am I the right person?" If the answer is NO, refer inquiries to the Public Relations representative for the SSSIO in your region, country, or zone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can relate to how Bhagawan's teachings have changed our lives for the better and will be inspired learning about His many core teachings such as "Love All, Serve All" and "Help Ever, Hurt Never"; and the service projects He has inspired people to do all around the world, for those in need. • Following this protocol will make sure we have the right people talking to the media such as radio and TV stations and also the right people arranging and coordinating public meetings.
How to Lead Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before meetings: Provide agenda, calendar set-up (avoiding potential meeting conflicts), supporting material, e-mail announcements, logistics plan or call-in number, food and refreshments if needed, IT support if needed, minutes recorder, and calendar reminders. • During meetings/conference calls: First, seek divine guidance; proceed with agenda review and any icebreaker; keep discussions on point, encouraging participation. In the meeting wrap-up, set the next meeting agenda and date, emphasising punctuality. Provide for mixed activities as needed and meeting analysis. At the end, express gratitude to God for His guidance. • After meeting: Prepare and publish minutes, summary documents; monitor progress of action items. • Meeting challenges: Punctuality, meeting dominator, silent participants, technical difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each meeting is an excellent opportunity to work with others with love and unity and to work on our own spiritual transformation. • Paying attention to details, such as starting and ending on time and including everyone in the discussion, helps everyone focus on the topic of discussion and work with love and unity. Seeking divine guidance at the outset and asking for continued guidance at the end of a meeting, and expressing gratitude to God, also helps keep everyone on the right track. • Receiving supporting documents before and after meetings, and including a summary of meeting notes helps everyone. • Listing the things that need to be done and who is responsible helps to monitor progress for each task, helps with accountability, and improves the chance that important tasks will be completed on schedule.
Unique features of SSSIO meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start meetings by invoking divine guidance and end meetings with expressions of gratitude to the Divine and ask for continued guidance. • Focus on communicating and collaborating with love, unity, and harmony. • Focus on Sathya Sai Baba's teachings and remember that loving communication is more important than the end result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we remember God and ask for His divine guidance, we will: • Communicate with love and respect, and foster harmony and unity at every meeting. • Make progress in our personal growth and spiritual transformation by communicating with love.