

TABLE 3.1

## Communication Skills

Communication skill	How to achieve a desirable outcome	Building skills in high school
Knowing what to say (and what not to say)	Students may need to be directly taught why they should show discretion when deciding what to say. For instance, they would be ill-advised to approach a professor and say, "I can't come to your office hours because they're too early in the morning, and I like to sleep in. Can I call you at home tonight to ask about my paper?" It's better if they can honestly say, "I have to be at work [or I have another class] during your office hours. Is there another time when I could contact you with questions about my paper?"	While they are in high school, students should be encouraged to interact with teachers, administrators, and other authority figures (e.g., coaches) in order to hone their communication skills in a more forgiving environment.
Knowing how to say it	Smith and colleagues (2002) suggested use of "I" language rather than "you" language when speaking to authority figures (e.g., "I experienced a problem when my teacher did not give me my accommodations," rather than "You didn't do what you were supposed to do!"). It is important to be able to ask clarifying questions in ways that do not sound blaming, sarcastic, or complaining.	Rehearsal and teachable moments should be used while students are in high school so that they can receive concrete feedback on their communication style. Students should be provided with examples of clear, polite requests or complaints and practice communicating them with an adult who can provide feedback. See also Lock & Layton (2001) for concrete steps that can be taught to students.
Knowing when to say it	Observe communication protocols. In college, this will mean making appointments to talk with a professor or DS coordinator, although it is okay to ask to be seen quickly in the case of an emergency.	Students may need to be explicitly taught about the consequences of breaching protocol (e.g., a teacher being less willing to offer additional assistance because a student was perceived as pushy), given rules to follow (e.g., ask no more than five questions per class), and given opportunities to role play conversations.
Knowing who to contact	In college, students will need to resolve their challenges independently (e.g., DS will not help them change dorm rooms because of a roommate problem). It will be their responsibility to communicate with professors or administrators, regardless of whether they are shy or intimidated. Individuals in the college setting are responsible for handling specific issues, and there are procedures in place that students are expected to follow.	It can help to directly teach students how to research the chain of command to identify and contact the appropriate person in any situation.