

Communication Skills for the Workplace

Career Education, Grade 9

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Rationale

A large percentage of young people preparing to enter the workforce over the next decades are significantly lacking in the “soft” or applied skills — such as teamwork, decision-making, and communication, initiative, interpersonal skills, work ethic. We often focus on the higher level thinking skills- creative, critical thinking, communication skills. Communication skills are necessary for the development of self-advocacy and self-determination, important skills for lifelong success for all our learners. This activity can be adapted for students with learning challenges. All students need opportunities to practice communicating their strengths and assets while learning how to minimize any perceived barriers to employment.

This lesson is based on, “*Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success*” a resource developed through extensive feedback from teachers and students.

Big Ideas	Reflecting on our preferences and skills helps us identify the steps we need to take to achieve our career goals.
Core Competencies	Communication, Creative thinking, Social responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain/recount and reflect• Connect and engage with others• Acquire, interpret and present information• Collaborate to plan, carry out and review• Developing ideas• Building relationships
Curricular Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use self-assessment and reflection to develop awareness of their strengths, preferences, and skills• Recognize the impact of personal public identity in the world of work• Demonstrate respect, collaboration, and inclusivity in working with others to solve problems
Essential Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are some types of communication?• Why is it important to communicate with people in a meaningful way?• How do we become misunderstood in our communication?• What does communication look like over generations?

Activity 1—What’s Your Point? (10 minutes)

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf> (see pages 19-22)

JUST THE FACTS: This activity helps participants understand the importance of being specific when offering and receiving communication. Often times our meaning gets lost, twisted, or misunderstood because we haven’t been specific enough in our communication or we haven’t asked clarifying questions. These role-plays are designed to demonstrate the value of being specific in communication...TO others and in what is received FROM others.

Materials

- Download <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf>
- Distribute a few copies of *Activity 1: What’s Your Point* on Pages 19-22 (at least one copy per volunteer actor/actress).
- Costumes and other props, if possible

Activity 2—Talking Circle (20 minutes)

- Ask each student to write the name of an occupation (Nurse, Driver, Lawyer, Customer Service) onto a scrap piece of paper. Place scrap paper into a box.
- Each student picks a piece of paper from the box and describes what types of communication skills are necessary to perform that job.

Directions Ask for volunteers to act out a short role-play. Each skit requires two people: one employee and one supervisor. In the first role play, Jade has a job mowing lawns and receives some not-so-positive feedback from Mr. Z., a client. In the second role play, Will works at a dentist’s office and has gotten into some trouble with his boss, Ms. T. *Suggestion: Encourage participants to ad-lib, or improvise, if they feel comfortable. Giving youth permission to ad-lib often makes activities more “real” and memorable. In addition, youth may wish to retry one or more of the skits and create their own characters.*

After each skit is read, ask the following questions:

- **Role Play #1:** How did Jade handle Mr. Z.’s comments? What did she do right? Was there anything she could have done differently? What about Mr. Z.? What could he have done differently?
- **Role Play #2:** How do you think Ms. T. handled the situation with Will’s lateness? How did Will handle Ms. T.’s disapproval? What might he have done differently? What might Ms. T. have done differently?

Conclusion

In either of these role-play situations, the employee could have “copped an attitude” or become defensive with the adult.

Re-read one or both of the activities and act out the situation differently. For example,

- What would it have looked and so sounded like if Jade had not demonstrated such a mature attitude.
- What would it have looked and sounded like if Will hadn't offered a suggestion for his situation?

Because each employee remained calm and asked additional questions to get clarity about each situation, he/she was able to communicate with the other person – and clearly identify the problem.

- Is this easy or difficult for you to do in most situations?
- If it's easy, what are some strategies you use that help you to “keep your cool”? If it's difficult, what might you try to do differently?

Journaling Activity

Think about a time when a parent, teacher, or friend criticized you. Describe the following:

- What happened? How did this make you feel? How did you handle it? Are you proud of the way you handled it?
- What might you do differently if something like this happens in the future? Did this experience change the way you offer feedback to others?

Extension Activity

Divide the group into smaller groups (no more than four per group). Have participants share (if they are comfortable) the situation they used for their journal entry.

- Use the situations to create and act out new role-play situations for the other groups.
- Three discussion questions should be written as well – and discussed as a group.
- Create three questions to be used with the larger group after the role-play is acted out.

Formative Assessment

Learning Standard	Activity	Assessment
Use self-assessment and reflection to develop awareness of their strengths, preferences, and skills	Role play #1 Role play #2	Re-create a role play of his/her choice
Recognize the impact of personal public identity in the world of work	Journaling Activity	Journal Entries
Demonstrate respect, collaboration, and inclusivity in working with others to solve problems	Extension Activity Three discussion questions to be used with the larger group	Create new role – play situations Written discussion questions- group discussion

Resource links for teachers and students

Skills to Pay the Bills – Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success

www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills

WorldHost Customer Training Services

<https://www.go2hr.ca/training/customer-service-training>

Toastmasters (public speaking skills)

<http://toastmastersoftoday.org>

