

Lesson One – Communication

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, participants will learn about communication skills and their importance in the workplace. Participants will then practice their communication skills using the Middle School Employability Skills Scenario Cards. The accompanying student workbooks are designed for independent study or as a homework assignment.

Lesson Objectives

In this lesson, participants will:

- Learn about communication skills and their importance in the workplace
- Discover the different types of communication skills
- Explore ways to improve their communication skills

Lesson at a Glance

Activity	Materials	Preparation	Approximate Class Time
FOCUS	• <i>Communication Introduction Scenario - Answer Key</i> • <i>Communication Introduction Scenario</i>	1. Print/photocopy the <i>Communication Introduction Scenario</i> (one per participant). 2. Have the answer key available for reference.	10 minutes
LEARN	• <i>Communication</i> slide presentation • Middle School Employability Skills Student Workbook	1. Prepare the <i>Communication</i> slide presentation for viewing. 2. Access student workbook activities.	30-60 minutes
REVIEW	• Middle School Employability Skills Scenario Cards • Middle School Employability Skills Student Workbook • <i>Communication Quiz</i> • <i>Communication Quiz – Answer Key</i>	1. Print/photocopy the <i>Communication Quiz</i> (one per participant). 2. Have the <i>Communication Quiz – Answer Key</i> available for reference. 3. Have the Communication scenario card available for display or reference. 4. Have participants access the <i>Communication Scenario</i> in their workbook.	20 minutes

Lesson One – Communication

FOCUS: Developing Awareness of Communication Skills in the Workplace

10 minutes

Purpose:

Help participants develop an awareness of communication skills in the workplace.

Materials:

- *Communication Introduction Scenario - Answer Key*
- *Communication Introduction Scenario*

Facilitation Steps:

1. Distribute the *Communication Introduction Scenario* worksheet before or at the beginning of class.
2. Have the *Communication Introduction Scenario* – Answer Key available.
3. Have participants read the information and complete the worksheet independently.
4. Have participants pair up after completion and share answers from the worksheet.

Communication Introduction Scenario

Makiyah and Jason are two coworkers at a local grocery store. They both work in the produce department and are responsible for ensuring the fruits and vegetables are fresh and well-stocked. One day, Makiyah noticed that some of the produce was starting to spoil and decided to speak to Jason about it.

“Hey Jason, have you noticed that some of the produce is starting to go bad?” Makiyah asked.

“No, I haven’t. Thanks for letting me know, Makiyah. We should probably check the shelves and remove anything that’s no longer fresh,” Jason replied.

“Great idea. I’ll take care of that while you restock the shelves with fresh produce,” Makiyah said.

“Sounds good. Thanks for bringing this to my attention,” Jason said, and they both went on to complete their tasks.

Makiyah and Jason’s communication skills were key to ensuring that the produce department continued to run smoothly. By communicating effectively, they were able to identify a problem and work together to solve it quickly.

REFLECT on the situation:

Why is it important to communicate effectively in the workplace?

What are some examples of effective communication skills between Makiyah and Jason?

Can you think of a time when you had to communicate with someone to solve a problem? How did it go?

After reading this story, how do you think you can improve your communication skills?

SHARE your thoughts with a peer when it is discussion time.

Communication Introduction Scenario – Answer Key

Makiyah and Jason are two coworkers at a local grocery store. They both work in the produce department and are responsible for ensuring the fruits and vegetables are fresh and well-stocked. One day, Makiyah noticed that some of the produce was starting to spoil and decided to speak to Jason about it.

“Hey Jason, have you noticed that some of the produce is starting to go bad?” Makiyah asked.

“No, I haven’t. Thanks for letting me know, Makiyah. We should probably check the shelves and remove anything that’s no longer fresh,” Jason replied.

“Great idea. I’ll take care of that while you restock the shelves with fresh produce,” Makiyah said.

“Sounds good. Thanks for bringing this to my attention,” Jason said, and they both went on to complete their tasks.

Makiyah and Jason’s communication skills were key to ensuring that the produce department continued to run smoothly. By communicating effectively, they were able to identify a problem and work together to solve it quickly.

REFLECT on the situation:

Why is it important to communicate effectively in the workplace?

Communicating effectively in the workplace ensures that the workday runs smoothly and all tasks are completed. Effective communication also increases employee morale and productivity while building a positive working environment.

What are some examples of effective communication skills between Makiyah and Jason?

It was good that Makiyah recognized some of the produce was starting to spoil and spoke with Jason about it, rather than assuming he already knew. It was also respectful the way Jason spoke to Makiyah, thanking her for bringing it to his attention.

Think of a time when you had to communicate with someone to solve a problem? How did it go?

There is no incorrect answer as each participant will have a different story to tell.

After reading this story, how do you think you can improve your communication skills?

These answers will also vary depending on the participant.

SHARE your thoughts with a peer when it is discussion time.

Lesson One – Communication

LEARN: Communication Slide Presentation and Activities

30-60 minutes

Purpose:

Participants will receive a thorough introduction to the several types of communication skills needed in the workplace to communicate with their job interviewers, customers, coworkers, and managers.

Materials:

- *Communication* slide presentation
- Middle School Employability Skills Student Workbook

Facilitation Steps:

1. Share the following information as you show the slide presentation.

Slide 1: Communication

Employability skills, also known as soft skills, refer to a set of skills and personal characteristics highly valued by employers and are essential for success in the workplace.

There are many employability skills that employers look for in an employee. The one we will cover in this lesson is communication.

Slide 2: Goals

The goals of this presentation are to:

- Learn about communication skills and their importance in the workplace
- Discover several types of communication skills
- Explore ways to improve your communication skills

Slide 3: What Are Communication Skills?

Communication is defined as “the transmission of information.”

Communication skills are what you use when relaying and receiving information. This involves speaking, listening, empathizing, and observing.

While you use these skills in your everyday life, communicating clearly and effectively is an essential and valuable skill, first to get a job and then to use these skills in the workplace.

Slide 4: The Importance of Communication Skills in the Workplace

Employers constantly include communication as a top skill they look for in job postings.

Communication skills are important in the workplace to provide excellent customer service and communicate effectively with your managers and coworkers.

Effective communication skills help build and maintain relationships, achieve personal and professional goals, and resolve conflicts. Without communication, businesses would not survive.

Slide 5: Types of Communication Skills

While there are more types of communication skills than these, the following are what will generally help you succeed in the workplace.

- Verbal
- Nonverbal
- Active listening
- Written
- Visual

Slide 6: Verbal Communication

Verbal communication involves communicating by speaking. You should be sure to speak clearly, at the right tone for the environment, and to choose the correct words when speaking. If the environment is loud, you should speak in a louder tone, and if the environment is quiet, you should talk in a softer voice. Choosing the correct words when speaking involves using words that fit your workplace. You do not want to use slang words or words that others may not understand.

Communicate with a positive, friendly attitude, keep an open mind, and ask questions or repeat back what the person said to show you are listening.

Be respectful when verbally communicating with others by allowing them to speak without interrupting. The first place you can show you have excellent verbal communication skills is in your job interview. Whether the interview is in person, online, or by phone, this is the time to demonstrate you can speak clearly and confidently with the interviewer and that you have a friendly demeanor.

Slide 7: Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is achieved through facial expressions, eye contact, body language, posture, and gestures. You can learn a lot about a person by their nonverbal communication. For example, when a person has their arms crossed in front of them and a scowl on their face, they are most likely angry.

Use positive nonverbal communication by:

- Maintaining eye contact with others
- Smiling when appropriate
- Nodding your head to emphasize you are listening

Nonverbal communication is also noted by the interviewer during your job interview.

They will look to see that you maintain eye contact, smile at appropriate times, sit upright, and are not distracted by your cell phone or other device.

Instructor Note: The next slide is a short video on nonverbal communication during a job interview.

Slide 8: Video

Instructor Note: After the video, you can move on to the next slide unless participants have any questions. Video link for reference: https://youtu.be/C_nl9FIF5Yc

Slide 9: Active Listening

Active listening, also called mindful listening, requires you to pay close attention to the person you are communicating with.

Active listening builds trust with the person and includes verbal and nonverbal communication. As you listen, focus on the person and avoid distractions like cell phones.

After the person is done speaking, you can ask questions or re-phrase what they said to make sure you understood them correctly.

Active listening also plays a big part during a job interview. The interviewer will often ask you questions to see if you are paying attention. If you do not have good listening skills during your interview, the interviewer may question how attentive of an employee you might be.

Slide 10: Written Communication

Written communication can be as important as verbal communication in the workplace. It is important to write clearly and legibly to avoid confusion among your coworkers or supervisor, which can impact teamwork and productivity.

If you are in a customer service position, poor written communication skills can

damage the company's reputation and make you appear uneducated.

Written communication skills are also essential when writing your resume, cover letter, and job applications. If your spelling and grammar are poor, employers will pass you over for another candidate. It is especially important that you do not use abbreviations or slang that you might use with your friends. While that is fine within your friend circle, employers do not want employees who cannot form complete sentences or who do not use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

A well-written resume shows the employer that you are professional and have strong written communication skills.

Slide 11: Visual Communication

Visual communication refers to communication with the help of visual aids, such as:

- Presentation software (PowerPoint, Google Slides, Visme, Canva)
- Graphs and charts
- Whiteboards
- Drawings
- Electronic aids
- Posters

Visual communication is a creative tool used to get a message across in a powerful way. Sometimes, visual communication can be more powerful in relaying a message than verbal, nonverbal, or written communication. Visual communication can be so effective because the information can be processed by our brains 60,000 times faster than text.

Slide 12: How to Improve Your Communication Skills

1. Use a strong, confident speaking voice. You can also practice speaking in front of your friends and family, asking for their feedback.
2. Practice actively listening. Pay special attention to what the speaker is saying

and do not interrupt while they are talking.

3. Be aware of your nonverbal communication. Are your arms crossed or hanging loosely at your side? Do you roll your eyes when someone says something you do not agree with, or do you look directly into the speaker's eyes? Do you have a smile or a frown on your face when being spoken to? All these gestures and body language will be observed by the person you are communicating with.
 4. Think before you speak. Once you say something, you cannot take it back.
 5. Improve your grammar and spelling by using a tutor, taking English classes, reading books on spelling and grammar, or taking a writing course.
 6. Proofread before sending any written communication. There are free editing tools you can use to double-check your work before sending it.
 7. Take public speaking classes. There are paid and free courses that will help improve your public speaking skills.
 8. Enroll in a communication course designed to improve your workplace communication skills.
2. Have participants access the student workbook pages for each of the following activities. Depending on the time you have, you may choose to do all the activities in class or assign some for outside of class time to be completed.

Alternatively, you may choose one activity if you have a shorter class period. If you wish to do a deeper dive into this soft skill, you could have participants do all the related activities in the workbook.

Activity 1: Write a Cover Letter

Using what they have learned about written communication, participants will create a cover letter using the template provided in the student workbook.

Students should write the cover letter as if they were applying for their dream job and

have the education and experience to apply for it! They will use the space in this template to compose their letter.

Activity 2: Prepare for a Job Interview

Participants learned about the importance of verbal communication in this lesson. They will participate in a mock interview. First, have them prepare by writing out answers to the interview questions in their student workbook. Then, assign groups of three. One will be the interviewer, one will be the interviewee, and the third participant will provide honest, constructive feedback on where participants could improve and where they did well in the interview. Each participant in the group will rotate through each position in this activity.

Activity 3: Nonverbal Communication Brainstorm Activity

Consider the many nonverbal ways in which people communicate. Have participants access this activity in their student workbook.

Participants will brainstorm and list all the different nonverbal ways they communicate thoughts and feelings, like crossed arms. As participants list each one, have them identify one way they think this nonverbal communication could be interpreted. For example, crossed arms could look disagreeable or not approachable.

If time permits, participants may act out one of their nonverbal communications listed in their worksheet and discuss impressions and impact on communication.

Lesson One – Communication

REVIEW: Practice and Assessment of Communication Skills

20 minutes

Purpose:

This brief quiz provides an assessment to show knowledge gained in the lesson. Participants will also apply what they have learned in a communication scenario.

Materials:

1. Middle School Employability Skills Program Scenario Cards
2. Middle School Employability Skills Student Workbook
3. *Communication Quiz*
4. *Communication Quiz – Answer Key*

Facilitation Steps:

1. Distribute the *Communication Quiz* to participants. Give them two to three minutes to work on it.

2. Have participant self-check their answers as you share from the answer key.
3. Display the Communication scenario card and/or have participants access this page in their student workbook. There are a few different ways you could choose to use this scenario for assessment.
 - a. Have the participants pair up and role-play the main characters in the scenario, read the scenario, and answer the key questions while in their role. The instructor(s) can assess participants' communication skills during their interactions and offer suggestions if necessary.
 - b. You can use the student workbook page as a written activity, having participants read the scenario and answer the key questions independently.

Name: _____ Class: _____

Communication Quiz

Instructions: Select the best answer to the following multiple-choice questions.

1. What is visual communication?
 - a. Communication in written form
 - b. Communication used with visual aids
 - c. Communication using body language
 - d. Communication using verbal cues
2. What two communication skills are used when actively listening to someone speak?
 - a. Patient education and compassion skills
 - b. Presentation and patient education skills
 - c. Written and nonverbal communication
 - d. Verbal and nonverbal communication
3. What is another term for active listening?
 - a. Mindful listening
 - b. Engaged listening
 - c. Critical listening
 - d. Intrigued listening
4. What type of communication is achieved through facial expressions and body language?
 - a. Visual
 - b. Verbal
 - c. Written
 - d. Nonverbal
5. How can you be respectful when verbally communicating with others?
 - a. Do not speak unless spoken to
 - b. Do not interrupt
 - c. Do not maintain eye contact
 - d. Do not smile

Communication Quiz – Answer Key

Instructions: Select the best answer to the following multiple-choice questions.

1. What is visual communication?
 - a. Communication in written form
 - b. Communication used with visual aids**
 - c. Communication using body language
 - d. Communication using verbal cues

2. What two communication skills are used when actively listening to someone speak?
 - a. Patient education and compassion skills
 - b. Presentation and patient education skills
 - c. Written and nonverbal communication
 - d. Verbal and nonverbal communication**

3. What is another term for active listening?
 - a. Mindful listening**
 - b. Engaged listening
 - c. Critical listening
 - d. Intrigued listening

4. What type of communication is achieved through facial expressions and body language?
 - a. Visual
 - b. Verbal
 - c. Written
 - d. Nonverbal**

5. How can you be respectful when verbally communicating with others?
 - a. Do not speak unless spoken to
 - b. Do not interrupt**
 - c. Do not maintain eye contact
 - d. Do not smile

Sources

1. Northrup, Genevieve. (2023, August 2). *10 Communication Skills for Your Life and Career Success*. Retrieved from <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/communication-skills>
2. Emerson, Mary Sharp. (2021, August 30). *8 Ways You Can Improve Your Communication Skills*. Retrieved from <https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/8-ways-you-can-improve-your-communication-skills/>
3. Vain, Claire. (2023, April 20). *Different Methods of Communication*. Retrieved from <https://cpdonline.co.uk/knowledge-base/business/different-communication-methods/>
4. Vogels, Rebecca. (2024). *4 Reasons Why You Should Integrate Visual Communication Into Your Workflow*. Retrieved from <https://usersnap.com/blog/visual-communication-workflow/>