

Middle School Employability Skills

Physical Activities

Lesson 1: Communication

1. **Silent Line-Up Challenge**

Students must line up by birthday (month/day only) without speaking. This reinforces nonverbal communication and problem-solving.

2. **Back-to-Back Drawing**

Students pair up and sit back-to-back. Give one student a simple image and the other a pencil and paper. The student with the image describes it while the other draws it. They compare the drawing to the image and discuss clarity of instructions and listening.

Lesson 2: Problem-Solving

1. **Obstacle Course Navigation**

In pairs, one student is blindfolded while the other verbally guides them through a simple obstacle course. This activity highlights trust, direction-giving, and thinking on your feet.

2. **Count 30**

Tell the group they must count from one to 30 as a group. Sounds easy? Not really.

There are guidelines they must follow:

They must say all 30 numbers (1-30) aloud in numerical order. No one person may say two consecutive numbers. All members of the group must say at least one number during the sequence.

If the group is smaller than 15, you may want to tell them that all group members must say at least two numbers sometime during the sequence. There may be no physical gestures while the group is counting (i.e.: no pointing, nodding, moving around). If you want to make the activity easier, skip the no physical gestures rule. Do not give them the idea of using physical movement to help, just do not tell them they cannot use gestures if they start using them. No two people may speak at the same time. If anyone says anything at all when another person in the group speaks, the group must begin again at 1.

Lesson 3: Interpersonal Skills

1. **Rock, Paper, Scissors**

Students pair up and compete in rock, paper, scissors. The person who gets the best out of three will stay standing. Keep playing until a champion remains. This encourages friendly interaction.

2. **Empathy Walk**

Tape a line across the floor and ask a series of “step forward if...” questions to create visual empathy and spark discussion.

Examples:

- Step forward if you have ever felt left out.
 - Step forward if you have helped a friend through a tough time.
 - Step forward if you have ever been nervous to speak in front of others.
 - Step forward if someone has ever made fun of you.
 - Step forward if you have ever stood up for someone else.
 - Step forward if you have ever wished someone would listen to you more.
 - Step forward if you have ever felt different from those around you.
 - Step forward if you have been proud of something you accomplished.
 - Step forward if you have wanted to give up but kept trying.
 - Step forward if you have been kind to someone, even when it was hard.
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Lesson 4: Responsibility

1. **The ABCs of Responsibility**

Have students line up and take turns saying something responsible they might do that starts with each letter of the alphabet. The first person says something that starts with the letter A, the second person says something that starts with the letter B, etc. If someone cannot think of something to say, they are out.

2. **What Would You Do? Corners Game**

Label corners as: Do It Myself, Ask for Help, Ignore It, and Blame Someone Else. Read responsibility scenarios and have students move to the corner representing their choice. Once all students choose a corner, discuss their decisions.

Scenarios:

- You forgot to bring your homework to class. Your teacher asks what happened.
 - You spilled water near a classmate’s backpack, but no one saw it.
 - You notice your group project is due tomorrow, and one team member has not done their part.
 - You accidentally broke a classroom supply that the teacher uses daily.
 - You did not study for a quiz and are tempted to look at your neighbor’s paper.
 - Your friend asked you to lie for them, so they will not get in trouble for missing an assignment.
 - You were put in charge of collecting the group’s permission slips and forgot to turn them in.
 - You saw someone else being blamed for something you did.
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Lesson 5: Teamwork

1. **Human Knot**

A classic team challenge: students stand in a circle, grab hands with two different people across from them, and try to untangle without letting go.

2. **Group Object Build**

Using only provided materials (e.g., straws, tape, index cards), groups are tasked with building the tallest structure in a set time. This activity emphasizes collaboration, planning, and shared leadership.

Lesson 6: Work Ethic

1. The Stapler Relay Race

Place students in groups of four. Give each group a set of papers that must be sorted and stapled. Each group should have the same number of handouts and a stapler. Have students work to see who gets their packets assembled the quickest.

2. The Trash Pickup

Divide students into even groups. Take students outside and have them clean up a public area of the school. See which group can collect the most trash in the allotted time.

Lesson 7: Listening

1. Whisper Circle (Telephone Game)

Students sit in a circle. A sentence is whispered from one student to the next. Discuss how miscommunication happens and how to prevent it.

2. Listening Scavenger Hunt

Give oral-only clues to find hidden items or complete tasks. This reinforces careful listening and following multi-step directions.

Lesson 8: Respect

1. Appreciation Circle

Have students stand in a circle. They should take turns giving sincere compliments to each other.

2. Four Corners

Present students with controversial statements or a question. Have students decide which corner they agree with based on the four statements. The four corners can be Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Sample statements:

- Everyone should play a sport.
- Everyone should get a college degree.
- Everyone should do chores.
- Everyone should learn a musical instrument.
- Everyone should take P.E. yearly.

Lesson 9: Critical Thinking

1. Pipe Cleaning Tower Challenge

Small groups use pipe cleaners to build the tallest free-standing structure. Add restriction during the challenge (e.g., one hand only, no talking).

2. Mystery Object Bags

Students reach into opaque bags with objects inside and must use critical thinking to identify them by touch. Follow up with “justify your reasoning” discussions.

Lesson 10: Time Management

1. Task Timing Estimation

Say a common chore or task. Assign a number of minutes to each corner (5 minutes, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, and 1 hour.)

- a. Changing a tire
- b. Washing and drying a load of towels
- c. Mowing a small lawn with a push mower
- d. Cleaning a small bathroom
- e. Folding a load of laundry and putting it away

2. Sticky Note Pyramids

Divide students into groups. Give them an even number of sticky notes. They must arrange the sticky notes into a shape you call out (e.g., pyramid, rectangle, square, triangle).

Lesson 11: Professionalism

1. Dress the Part Relay

Teams race to assemble “professional outfits” from a pile of clothes (ties, jackets, badges). They must discuss what is appropriate and why.

2. Professionalism Role-Play Freeze

Have students walk around. Call out “Freeze!” and randomly select one student to ask a question about professionalism. If they cannot answer it, they stay frozen while everyone else walks around.

Lesson 12: Decision-Making and Goal Setting

1. Goal Ladder Toss

Option 1:	Option 2:
• Create a list of jobs I am interested in • Write or update my resume • Ask someone to review my resume • Practice answering interview questions • Apply to at least 3 jobs • Follow up with one place I applied • Go to the interview prepared and on time • Get the job!	• Organize my notes and assignments • Ask the teacher what I can improve • Set aside study time each day • Complete all homework on time • Review class material each week • Attend any available tutoring • Ask questions in class • Raise my grade by one full letter

2. Would You Rather...

Present students with two options. Have them go to a designated side of the classroom based on their response.

Sample questions:

- Would you rather be able to fly or be invisible?
 - Would you rather be a genius or a professional athlete?
 - Would you rather lose your memory or lose your sight?
 - Would you rather be really tall or really short?
 - Would you rather be a movie star or a famous musician?
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Lesson 13: Honesty and Integrity

1. Truth Toss

Stand in a circle and toss a ball. The catcher answers a prompt about an honest or dishonest scenario and explains what they would do.

Sample Prompts:

- You find money in the hallway at school, and no one is around.
- You saw your friend copy answers on a test.
- You forgot to do your group's part of a project, and the teacher asks what happened.
- You broke something at home, but your sibling is blamed.
- You told your friend you would keep a secret, but now someone could get hurt.
- You were asked if you completed your chores, but you have not.
- Your friend lies to get out of trouble and wants you to back them up.
- You accidentally read a private message on someone's phone.
- You are praised for something you did not actually do.
- You overhear someone spreading a rumor that is not true.

2. Integrity Corner

Read each statement. Have students decide how much the action challenges or questions the student's integrity. Assign each corner with an amount: A huge amount, a lot, an average amount, a very little amount.

Sample statements:

1. You find a pencil on the floor and keep it.
2. You agree to let a friend copy your homework.
3. You write down key math formulas on your hand.
4. You refuse to help your parents with chores.
5. You find a \$5 bill on the ground and keep it.
6. You sign your parent's name on a permission slip.

Lesson 14: Team Building

1. **Getting in Order**

Have all students line up. Give them a challenge, such as line up from shortest to tallest, line up in ABC order based on your middle name, or line up in order based on your birthdate.

2. **30-Second Sales Pitch**

Have students draw one item out of a mystery bag. From there, they must work with a randomly assigned partner to create a 30-second sales pitch for that item. Students will present their sales pitches to the class.

Lesson 15: Conflict Resolution

1. **Conflict Charades**

One student acts out a common workplace conflict while others guess what it is and suggest resolution strategies.

- Two coworkers argue over who should clean up a shared workspace.
- Someone constantly interrupts during team discussions.
- A student refuses to help with a group project but still wants credit.
- A coworker takes credit for another person's idea.
- A teammate is always late, slowing down the whole group.
- Someone is using their phone during work time and ignoring others.
- Two people have different opinions on how to solve a problem.
- Someone is being bossy and not listening to their teammates' ideas.
- A student spreads a rumor that causes tension in their class.
- Someone makes a mistake but blames someone else.

2. **Walk and Talk Mediation**

In pairs, students walk while role-playing opposing views on a scenario. A third peer plays "mediator" and helps guide resolution. Have each trio select a common problem that may require mediation.

Lesson 16: Creativity

1. **Improv Skills**

Students are given random workplace objects. They act out a short scene in groups using the item creatively.

2. **Creativity Relay Challenge**

Teams race to stations where they complete quirky design prompts (e.g., build a bridge out of three paper clips and one rubber band). Each task builds on the last team's work.

Lesson 17: Motivation

1. **Goal Setting and Taking Steps**

Have students line up on one side of the room and think of a short-term goal. Then, have them share their goal aloud and take the number of steps forward they think represents reaching that goal. Complete the activity a second time while setting long-term goals. Allow them to jump, jog, run, etc. to show reaching the goal more quickly or over a longer period of time.

2. **Positive Self-Talk Circle Toss**

In a circle, students toss a soft ball while stating a motivational phrase or goal they are working toward. This builds verbal affirmation skills and confidence.

Lesson 18: Flexibility

1. **Reverse Roles Relay**

Students must complete tasks using their non-dominant hand. Consider having them stand up and do things such as write their name on the board with their non-dominant hand, etc.

2. **Change It Up Game**

Have students start performing a repetitive action (like clapping patterns or a dance move). Pick a leader to change the action. Continue this activity through a few different leaders. Each time the leader suddenly changes the action. The rest must instantly adapt, highlighting the importance of adjusting to change.

Lesson 19: Self-Confidence

1. **Confidence Catwalk**

Students take turns doing a “confident walk” across the classroom while stating one strength or something they are proud of.

2. **Compliment Tag**

Play tag, but when a student is tagged, the tagger must give them a compliment. They switch roles and keep playing. This builds self-esteem and community.

Lesson 20: Stress Management

1. **Mindful Movement Break**

Lead the class in a short yoga or stretching routine focusing on breathing. Connects movement to stress reduction.

2. **Stress Ball Toss**

In pairs or small groups, toss a stress ball while answering reflection prompts like “What helps you relax when you feel overwhelmed?”

