

Using Scenario-Based Learning To Explore Careers

A Guide to Creating Real-World Learning Experiences That Foster Job Skill Exploration and Development



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Scenario-based learning is a fun and engaging strategy for helping students learn concepts and make lasting connections with classroom material. This instructional strategy engages students with interaction, offers multiple opportunities for feedback and helps students hone important soft skills. We created this guide to share ideas and benefits for using scenario-based learning to explore careers. Whether you are teaching hard skills or soft skills, scenario-based learning can help you incorporate real-world learning experiences that foster job skill exploration and development.



3 Benefits of Scenario-Based Learning for Career Exploration

1. Scenarios Create “Sticky” Learning Experiences

A “sticky” learning experience is one that students remember because it made a lasting impact. Scenario-based learning helps explain the “why” behind the lesson, which lets students connect what they are learning to the larger context. Scenario-based learning makes lessons “sticky” by engaging students in realistic experiences, incorporating emotions and creating a memorable story.



2. Scenarios Foster Soft Skill Development

“Soft skills” have been buzz words for many years because studies continue to show that today’s students lack skills like teamwork, communication and problem-solving as they enter the workforce. Scenario-based learning helps students develop soft skills as they are challenged with situations that require them to think critically, solve problems, communicate and listen – skills that are further developed when students interact with each other during the scenario and reflect on the experience afterward.

3. Scenarios Create Safe Spaces for Making Mistakes and Gaining Proficiency

Scenario-based learning lets students respond to situations in any way they deem appropriate, then reflect on how that response impacted the situation. Post-scenario reflection reinforces the right approach by giving students the chance to reflect on responses from others, consider feedback and make changes. This can all be done in a safe place: the classroom.

See Realityworks’ scenario-based learning products on page 3 and 6.

How to Build a Scenario for Career Exploration

We consider four key factors when creating our scenario-based learning tools:

- 1 Soft skills:** Each scenario is based on developing key soft skills. The scenario framework is built around developing this skill.
- 2 Realistic situation:** Each scenario features a situation from real-world workplace settings so students can practice skills while learning practical aspects of potential careers.
- 3 Points of view:** By encompassing a variety of perspectives in each scenario, students have opportunities to consider every individual and what their personal perspective could be of the situation.
- 4 Key questions:** We wrap several key questions around each scenario to help ensure students can think critically about the situation and enhance learning with further discussion.

Sample scenario card from Realityworks:

RealCareer™ Employability Skills Program

Listening

Scenario: You have been employed at a new company for about six months. A co-worker, David, has been repeatedly sexually harassing you. You finally decide you've had enough and decide to file a complaint with Human Resources. You meet with the HR Director, Monica. During your meeting, she never takes any notes as you speak. She keeps checking her phone and also her Facebook on her laptop. You notice that she is doodling on her notepad. At the end of the conversation, you wonder if she really understood your concern at all.

Points of view to consider

- You, the employee
- Monica, the HR Director
- David, the co-worker

Key questions

- Has Monica shown active listening behavior? What non-verbal cues has she shown the employee about her level of interest?
- What could Monica do to be a better active listener in the future? Do a short role-play between Monica and the employee, where Monica uses active listening strategies in the meeting.
- How do you, the employee, feel after your meeting? Do you feel that your concerns were heard?

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Resources for Building Career Exploration Scenarios

Creativity is key when it comes to building scenarios for your students – the sky is the limit! These resources offer a solid starting point for creating career exploration scenarios in today's classrooms:

Colleagues. Ask your coworkers to write scenarios from career situations they have experienced. If they need ideas, ask them to consider workplace issues that included:

- Communication problems
- Bullying
- Customer disagreements
- Discrimination
- Performance issues

YouTube. Keywords like “work scenarios” and “career situations” yield many intriguing results when entered into YouTube.

Students' family members. Ask your students to interview their family members about experiences they have had in the workplace.

Your students. Do your students have part-time jobs outside of school? Ask those who do to present experiences where they had to deal with a workplace issue. Through interviews, discussion and presentation (all important soft skills), you can create scenarios based on their experiences for the entire class to discuss.

Career-specific soft skills scenario cards by Realityworks. Explore Realityworks' soft skills scenario cards, which are based on key soft skills needed for success in a variety of different occupations. Scenario cards are also available that address general employability situations.

Are you focused on a specific career? Reach out to professionals from your community who work in the industry you want to showcase. These individuals have a real-time understanding of the importance of technical and soft skills in job candidates, and as such, will likely not mind volunteering a few minutes of their time to assist. It never hurts to ask!

	Employability Skills Program Workplace Scenario Cards	Leadership Soft Skills Program Scenario Cards			
	Agriculture Career Scenario Cards	Horticulture Career Scenario Cards	Vet Tech Career Scenario Cards		
	Child Care Career Scenario Cards	Culinary Career Scenario Cards	Textiles and Fashion Apparel Career Scenario Cards	Interior Design Career Scenario Cards	Food Processing, Production, & Safety Career Scenario Cards
	Nursing Career Scenario Cards	Nursing Career: Geriatric Patients Career Scenario Cards	Medical Assistant Career Scenario Cards	Sports Medicine Career Scenario Cards	EMT Careers Scenario Cards
	Welding Career Scenario Cards	Construction Career Scenario Cards	Manufacturing Career Scenario Cards	Electrician Career Scenario Cards	

<https://www.realityworks.com/product-category/soft-skills-training/page/2/>

Incorporating Scenarios Into Lessons

Our favorite ways to incorporate scenario-based learning into the classroom include:



Icebreaker Activities

Begin your class with a 5-minute workplace scenario challenge. Pick a scenario and read or display it to the class. Ask students to work on their own answers, then share them as a class or as a think-pair-share activity.



Team Challenges

Organize students into small groups to discuss the scenario, key questions, and various points of view. If several scenarios are available, have the teams exchange after 10 minutes. Wrap the activity by gathering the class back together as a big group and share answers to key questions.



Teaching Soft Skills

Choose a soft skill you wish to teach and write scenarios based on those skills. Teach the lesson on the skill you have chosen. After the lesson has been taught, have the students review the scenario with that soft skill in mind and answer the key questions.



Escape Room Activities

Create a classroom escape room, or breakout challenge, that is focused on scenarios. Fill a locked box with prizes of your choosing, then lay out the scenarios your students must complete to open the box. You can organize students into small groups, increasing motivation by telling them that the first group to finish their scenario completely gets first pick of the prizes. You could also allocate different parts of your classroom for a different scenario.



Bell Ringer Activities

Bell ringer activities, or warm-up activities that students complete at the beginning of the class while you're passing out materials or taking attendance, can be great activities for jump-starting classroom participation. Pass out scenario cards to small groups of students to read through, then instruct them to journal their answers to the key questions. You could also hand out your own scenarios for students to think-pair-share as you get organized for the day or consult a student independently.



Substitute Teacher Plans

Scenario cards can help substitute teachers engage with students and make the most of classroom time. Leave instructions and cards, and if more time is needed, provide a list of reflection activities (*see page 5 for more ideas*).

Post-Scenario Reflection Activities

Debriefing is essential to a successful scenario-based learning experience. It is a time of individual and group reflection. Discussing the topics addressed by each scenario is not only educational for your students, but it allows them to learn from each other. Writing or presenting on what students think went well, what could be improved and what they noticed are all activities that encourage connection – and make the experience sticky.

Ideas for reflection include:

Journaling, where students write freely about their experience. They can turn it in to you or keep as a reference.

Reflective essays, in which students answer predetermined essay questions about the personal developments or connections they made to scenario content.

Classroom discussion, where students share ideas and feedback with each other.

Small-group discussion, where students break into small groups to share ideas and feedback with each other. One noteworthy benefit to small-group reflection is that students have more time to talk and share.

Class presentations, where students present orally or through a slide show or video on what they have learned from multiple scenario-based learning experiences. Tip: If you're focused on a specific career, require students to include other information they learned about "a day in the life" of their chosen career.

Don't forget to repeat the scenario. After concluding your reflection activities, consider repeating the activity to see if students change their response based on what they previously considered. This could be done the same day or during a different lesson.



Scenario Cards from Realityworks

Our CTE pathway/occupation-specific workplace scenario cards cover real-world situations in Agriculture, Family & Consumer Sciences, Health Science and Trade Skills careers. Use these cards to develop soft skills within specific occupations through small-group discussions, large-group icebreakers or as individual challenges.



For pricing and ordering information, visit <https://www.realityworks.com/product-category/soft-skills-training/>