

WORKING WITH OTHERS



AGENDA

- SESSION 1
 - Starter
 - Workplace Dos
 - Workplace Don'ts
- SESSION 2
 - Workplace Don'ts (continued)
 - Practice, Practice, Practice
 - Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will identify positive behaviors in the workplace.

Students will identify negative behaviors in the workplace and recognize that constructive criticism can correct those behaviors.

Students will practice their skills for working well with coworkers.

Materials Needed

- Session 1: Two Hula-Hoops (Part I)
- Session 1: Dictionary (Part I)

- Session 2: Dictionary (Part I)
- Session 2: One copy of the “Workplace Role Plays” activity sheet for each student (Part II)

SESSION 1

Starter (3 minutes)

Ask students, “If you had to build a skyscraper, how would you do it?” Allow students to offer responses.

Explain to students that one thing is certain: the construction of the Empire State Building and all other skyscrapers required teamwork. Tell students that this lesson will help them learn the skills that they need to cooperate with coworkers and keep a positive attitude on the job.

Part I Workplace Dos (35 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify the importance of working together, offering and receiving praise, and taking responsibility in the workplace.

1. Students learn the importance of teamwork.

Tell students that in this activity they are going to develop some positive workplace behaviors.

Divide the class into two groups. Give students in both groups the following directions:

- As a group, your goal is to raise the Hula-Hoop to eye level and then lower it to the ground.
- You may only use your index fingers to raise and lower the hoop. No other fingers may touch the hoop. Your index fingers must be kept flat and cannot hook around the hoop.
- You may talk as you play. You can do whatever you think will allow you to raise and lower the hoop quickly.
- If you drop the hoop, you must start over.
- The first team to raise and lower the hoop wins.

Have the groups form two circles and keep their hands at waist level. Tell them to extend their index fingers. Place the hula-hoops on their index fingers. Then, tell the groups to take two or three minutes to plan how to achieve the goal. After the groups have agreed on how to raise and lower the hoop, tell them to begin.

Stop the game when one team has finished. Ask the first team to finish to explain what they did to win the game. Allow students to respond. Lead students to the understanding that though they may have had many different strategies, they all had to work together and communicate effectively to accomplish their goal.

Ask students to imagine that their group is the kitchen crew at a local restaurant. It's lunch hour, and the restaurant is filled with hungry people who need to get back to work quickly. The boss is tense, and he is yelling at them to hurry. What could they do in this situation to make things run smoothly and efficiently? Allow the groups two or three minutes to brainstorm courses of action.

Ask each group to present a solution. Write their responses on the board. When students have presented their ideas, encourage them to realize that working together on the job makes things go much more smoothly and effectively and keeps relationships with coworkers positive.

Ask students if teamwork has another result. Prompt them by asking them to consider how they felt while they were trying to raise and lower the Hula-Hoops. Elicit from students that they were having fun and that working together makes things—including jobs—more enjoyable.

2. Students recognize the power of praise in the workplace.

Ask students to imagine that they played an incredible game of basketball, did everything right, and scored lots of points, but no one congratulated them or acknowledged how well they played. How would they feel?

Point out to students that we don't do things well just because we want praise. We do them because people with self-respect always do their best at everything they do. Emphasize, however, that when we do something well, it's nice for people to notice. Praise can increase our self-respect. Lead students to understand that receiving a compliment on the job can show people that they are respected and that the job they are doing is appreciated.

3. Students recognize the importance of personal accountability in the workplace.

Say to students:

Imagine that your favorite clothing brand has just made a new jacket that you want. Your best friend already owns it. You don't have the cash to buy it right now, so you borrow your friend's jacket for the afternoon and evening. You promise to be careful with it and to return it tomorrow. When you get home, you're about to put the jacket into the closet when you accidentally knock your soda over and spill it on the jacket! You try to clean it up, but it's too late. It's ruined. You don't have enough money to replace it. What are you going to do?

Write their responses on the board.

Ask students to speculate on the outcomes of each action they suggested. Students should understand that if they choose to lie, the friend could find out the truth and never trust the student again. The consequences of honesty are that the friend will be upset but will probably get over it and forgive the student.

Ask students to consider if they behave differently with a person they do not trust. (Student responses might include that they don't tell the person things, they don't count on the person, and they don't respect them.)

Ask students to translate this to the workplace. If their coworkers felt this way about them, what would work be like? Lead students to understand that it would probably not be a comfortable place to work.

It's crucial to develop trust with the people with whom we work. At work, we need credibility. Ask a volunteer to look up the word "credibility." Credibility is trustworthiness. Explain that when students have credibility, people respect them and believe what they say. Ask students to suggest ways to build credibility, or trustworthiness. Write student responses on the board. (Students might respond: behaving honestly and openly, admitting when you have made a mistake or need help, being friendly.)

Part II Workplace Don'ts (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify negative behaviors in the workplace and learn how to build credibility.

1. Students predict behaviors that are detrimental in the workplace.

Explain to students that they will now be examining some behaviors that are not acceptable in the workplace.

Ask students to predict what some of these behaviors might be. Write their responses on the board. Save this list for use in Session 2.

2. Students recognize that rudeness and negativity in the workplace are destructive.

Ask students to define the phrase "What goes around comes around." Lead students to the understanding that when they praise other people and show them respect, they will receive respect in return. Point out that it also means that if students are disrespectful, that behavior will be noticed and returned as well.

Ask students how disrespect might show up in the workplace. (Students might respond: being rude, being overly critical, gossiping, and having a bad attitude.)

Summarize by pointing out that one of the best ways to build credibility is to show that you're accountable for your actions by taking responsibility for them, whether they have positive or negative results. Sometimes, this means admitting that you made a mistake—like admitting to your friend that you ruined the jacket. Just like in that situation, the odds are always better when you tell the truth.

SESSION 2

Part I Workplace Don'ts (continued) (20 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify negative behaviors in the workplace and learn that constructive criticism can correct those behaviors.

1. Students review workplace dos and don'ts.

Before class begins, write the following questions on the board:

- How old are they?
- What do they like to eat?
- What did they do last weekend?

Briefly review the previous session. Elicit from students the importance of teamwork, praise, accountability, and the avoidance of rudeness and negativity.

2. Students recognize the danger of office gossip.

Explain to students that there is another behavior in the workplace that can be destructive: gossip. Tell students that they will play a game to see the problems that gossip can cause.

Divide the class into groups of four. Ask for a volunteer from each group. Give each volunteer the following directions: "You must pretend that you're invisible. You can see and hear everything that's going on, but you can't do or say anything about it."

Give these directions to the other students: "Your job is to have a conversation about the volunteer. You're going to discuss the three questions on the board. If you don't know the answers, you can guess or make them up." Remind students to maintain school-appropriate behavior.

Instruct students to begin.

After each group has answered the questions about their volunteer, ask:

- How many of you made up answers when you didn't know them?
- Volunteers, did the people talking about you answer the questions correctly? How did you feel when people were talking about you?

Lead students to understand that answering questions about other people can be risky. If you give wrong answers, you may be spreading gossip.

Ask the class to define “gossip.” Lead students to understand that gossip is rumor—information spread about people without their knowledge that is not necessarily true or kind. Explain that simply passing on information that you have heard, whether it is true or false, is gossiping.

Help students to recognize that gossiping is disrespectful. It puts another person in a powerless position because the individual cannot correct the information. It’s often difficult to figure out the real story from gossip, so the information may very well be untrue.

Ask students to think of the problems that workplace gossip can cause. (Students might respond: if someone feels you can’t be trusted, they may not share important information with you; if the supervisor and the people you work with don’t think you’re trustworthy, you won’t receive additional opportunities; gossip is bad for morale and office culture; gossip can make it difficult to keep a positive attitude.)

3. Students review their list of poor workplace behaviors.

Call students’ attention to the list of negative behaviors on the board. Have them discuss what they learned about rudeness, negativity, criticism, disrespect, and gossip.

Point out that positive behavior in the workplace is similar to good behavior anywhere: courteous and respectful words and actions are always appropriate.

4. Students learn about constructive criticism.

Ask students to describe how they would feel if someone were to criticize them constantly. Lead students to recognize that being criticized all the time can hurt one’s self-esteem. Explain that there are ways to give criticism constructively that actually help people to improve instead of making them feel bad about themselves and their contributions.

Give students the following scenario:

You’re working in an office, and one of your tasks is to file a stack of papers. You’re in a hurry, so you make all the files and you put the papers in the correct folders, but you don’t put the files themselves in alphabetical order. Your boss finds them and feels that you could have done a more complete job. How could your boss best convey this to you?

Give students 30 seconds to write down their answers. Ask volunteers to share their responses. Write their answers on the board.

Ask, “What’s the difference between a comment like ‘This is terrible! Don’t you know how to alphabetize?’ and ‘Next time, would you please alphabetize the files?’” Note that it is most helpful to point out a specific behavior and offer a suggestion for improvement to the person you would like to correct. Point out that this is called “constructive criticism” or “feedback.”

Ask students what the word “constructive” means. If students do not know, ask a volunteer to look it up in a dictionary. Students should recognize that “constructive” means useful and helpful. Explain that constructive criticism helps a person to understand mistakes in order to improve the next time.

Point out that constructive criticism helps people improve themselves and their performance on the job. While people usually don’t want to hear any criticism, constructive comments help people improve without feeling embarrassed or angry.

Part II Practice, Practice, Practice *(30 minutes)*

Purpose: Students practice their skills for working well with coworkers.

1. Students work in groups to prepare scenarios about the workplace.

Have students form groups of three or four.

Explain to students that they will role-play some scenarios about working well with coworkers. Instruct students to create relevant scenarios or adapt the ones found on the “Workplace Role Plays” activity sheet. Remind students to consider what they have learned about positive and negative workplace behaviors.

2. Students present their role plays.

Allow students about five minutes to rehearse their role plays; then, ask each group to perform its role play for the class.

3. Students analyze the role plays.

When students have finished performing, discuss the role plays with the class. Ask the following questions:

- Did you find it easy or difficult to handle these situations?
- What did you think about as you tried to find good solutions for these situations?
- What did you or others do well?
- What could you or others have done better?

Sum up the role-playing exercise by stating that working well with others takes a lot of practice and patience. Remind students that keeping a good attitude makes it easier. People will appreciate their positive approach, and that will lead to more opportunities, promotions, and good recommendations.

Conclusion *(2 minutes)*

Ask students to list positive behaviors that improve the workplace. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Teamwork on the job is important.
- Use good communication skills, including praise and constructive criticism, while on the job.
- Be accountable for your actions. Take responsibility for the bad as well as the good.
- Avoid gossip in the workplace.

Student Assessment

SESSION 1

1. List three ways that you can encourage teamwork on the job.
2. Define “credibility” and explain what you can do to gain and maintain it in the workplace.

SESSION 2

1. List three possible results of gossiping in the workplace.
2. What is the difference between criticism and constructive criticism?
3. Describe a person who works well with others on the job.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.”

Explain to students that the workplace is similar to a sports team. For any business to be a success, each employee must give their all. Discuss with students how one poor employee brings down morale and affects productivity.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Play some of the great jazz recordings of Ella Fitzgerald scatting with Duke Ellington.

Invite students to explain improvising or scatting. Discuss the importance of improvising in the workplace.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students assess their day. What does having a great day mean to them? Is it the day they get a phone call they've been waiting for, winning a contest, getting an A on an exam, going someplace special, or just a day when nothing goes wrong?

Have students discuss what a great workday would be for them.

Using Technology

Play Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Explain to students that classical music involves discipline and teamwork. Discuss with students how an orchestra has over 100 musicians—strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion—playing in unison under the direction of a conductor. The Ninth Symphony also features a full chorus of basses, baritones, altos, and sopranos. All must read music and sing their parts perfectly.

Invite students to pick out their favorite parts of the Ninth Symphony. Discuss how working together to create music is similar to working together on the job.

Homework

Have students interview a family member about problems they have had with coworkers.

Have students report on how their family members resolved conflicts they had on the job.

Additional Resources

Have students review *Winning with Teamwork: Quotations to Inspire the Power of Teamwork* by Katherine Karvelas. Have students share the quotes they found most inspiring. As a class, discuss the effect that strong teamwork skills can have on one's life, job, and career.

WORKPLACE ROLE PLAYS

- 1.** You and a coworker are on your lunch break. Two other coworkers sit down with you and begin gossiping about another coworker. They encourage you to gossip with them. What do you do?
- 2.** You're stocking shelves with someone who is new on the job. The new person doesn't know that the shelves are stocked alphabetically, so he is stocking them according to size. The individual is proud of the artistic job he is doing. What do you do?
- 3.** You and your coworkers at the restaurant where you work have just spent 45 minutes cleaning the kitchen. Your boss comes in and asks in an irritated voice why the kitchen is such a mess. The sink has dishes in it, and the counters need to be wiped. What do you do?
- 4.** You and a coworker both applied for a promotion. You are both good workers, but your colleague has been on the job for about six months longer than you have, so he gets the promotion. What do you say to your coworker?
- 5.** You have completed all of your tasks for your shift. You are about to ask your boss if you can leave a few minutes early. Then, a coworker comes to you to ask for your help. Your colleague has six tasks to do before her shift ends, and she is not sure they can all be finished. What do you do?
- 6.** You are working at an ice cream parlor near your house. A mother with five young children comes in and places a very complicated order. You observe that a newly hired coworker fills the difficult order correctly and with a pleasant smile. What do you do?