

PART II

# ACQUIRING CORE SKILLS

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COMMUNICATION

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# UNDERSTANDING NONVERBAL MESSAGES

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Silent Movies
- Words or Actions?
- Say What?
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize their ability to communicate without using words.

Students will analyze the importance of the nonverbal messages they send.

Students will practice using nonverbal cues to communicate.

**Starter (3 minutes)**

As a class, discuss how certain animals communicate nonverbally. Give the following examples:

- Did you know that when a deer shows the white on its tail, it's signaling danger?
- Did you know that when a horse flattens its ears against its head, it's telling you that it's angry?

Invite students to give additional examples of how animals—their pets, for example—communicate nonverbally. Point out that people communicate nonverbally as well. Explain that students will explore how and what they communicate with body language.

**Part I Silent Movies (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students recognize their ability to communicate without using words.

**1. Students consider examples of nonverbal communication.**

Ask if anyone knows what a silent movie is. If necessary, explain that when movies were first made, they did not have any sound. The audience never heard the actors speak. Information about the story was shown in writing on the screen between scenes. If there was background music, it was provided by someone who played the piano in the movie theater as the movie was shown.

Ask students to speculate about how actors could tell a story if they could not be heard speaking. List ideas on the board. After a brief discussion, ask, “Do you think it was easy or difficult for the actors to communicate without using words? Let’s try it out.”

**2. Students use body language to send messages.**

Select four volunteers to come to the front of the room to help with a demonstration. Explain that each volunteer will attempt to communicate an emotion without using words. The rest of the class must guess what it is. Tell students to observe each demonstration carefully so that they can answer questions about it afterward.

One at a time, whisper one of the following emotions to each volunteer: fear, anger, happiness, and surprise. After students correctly identify an emotion, ask them to describe how the volunteer revealed that emotion. Encourage students to describe specific gestures, facial expressions, and body postures. Explain that when students used these actions, they sent messages through body language.

Follow the same procedure with four new volunteers. Tell students that these new volunteers will try to communicate messages, instead of emotions. Whisper one of the following messages to each volunteer before beginning:

- It's okay.
- What time is it?
- Be quiet.
- I'm sorry.

### 3. Students reflect on their experience.

Ask students if it was difficult to understand what messages were being conveyed when no words were spoken. Say, "We've looked at some obvious examples of nonverbal communication, but these examples show how effective body language can be. It's important to be aware of the nonverbal messages you send, since you might be sending the wrong messages."

### 4. Students recognize culture as a factor in interpreting nonverbal messages.

Ask students if they have ever misread someone's nonverbal messages. Ask students if someone has ever misread their nonverbal messages. Tell students that sometimes those misunderstandings are the result of different cultural norms. Explain that nonverbal cues are interpreted with regard to cultural background.

## Part II Words or Actions? (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students begin to understand the importance of the nonverbal messages they send.

### 1. Students discuss the importance of body language.

List some of the ways that nonverbal messages are conveyed by writing the words "facial expressions," "gestures," and "body posture" on the board.

Say, "Sometimes it's not just what you say, but the way you say it that can send messages to others." Ask students to watch carefully as you demonstrate that point as follows:

- Look a student directly in the eye as you firmly say, "I was late because my car wouldn't start."
- Turn away briefly, then address the student again. This time, look above and to the right of the student and then to the ground as you hesitantly say, "I was late because my car wouldn't start."

Ask the student to explain why you did not seem to be telling the truth the second time. (The student should mention your not looking directly at them and your hesitation to speak.)

Add "eye contact" to your list on the board. Explain that eye contact, or the lack of it, sends a strong message. Ask:

- If you talk to someone and look that person directly in the eyes, what message are you sending? (You mean what you say; you're being honest and sincere.)
- What about if you are listening to someone while looking that person directly in the eyes? (You are giving the person and what they are saying your full attention.)

Remind students that nonverbal messages can mean different things in different cultures. For example, it is disrespectful in some cultures for a child to look an adult directly in the eyes.

## **2. Students identify ways in which their words and body language might conflict.**

By asking questions such as the following, begin a discussion about how people can send conflicting messages through their words and body language:

- Have you ever heard someone say that actions speak louder than words? What do you think this means?
- Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Do you think that our body language can send messages that are different from our words? If so, how?

Encourage students to give examples. If necessary, prompt students by demonstrating how words and body language can send conflicting messages by standing with your shoulders slouched and frowning as you say, "I'm really happy to be here today." Invite students to explain how your words and actions send conflicting messages.

## **3. Students draw conclusions about nonverbal communication.**

Emphasize the importance of nonverbal communication by explaining that people send just as many nonverbal messages as verbal ones. Focus attention on the power of body language by saying, "Sometimes, your body may tell a different story than the one coming out of your mouth. When this happens, which one should the listener believe? If you want people to understand you, make sure your words and actions communicate consistent messages."

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## **Part III Say What? (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students create and perform scenarios in order to practice using nonverbal cues to communicate.

### **1. Students create role plays that involve nonverbal cues.**

Have students work with partners or in small groups of three or four to create brief role plays that involve people who are communicating nonverbally. Students should include one of the following examples:

- Sending a nonverbal message only, using no words at all
- Using body language to emphasize or complement a verbal message
- Sending one message verbally and a conflicting message nonverbally

## 2. Students present their role plays.

Invite students to present their role plays to the class. After each presentation, encourage the class to describe the messages conveyed in the role play. The student performers should explain how well the class explained the messages.

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## Conclusion (2 minutes)

Close this lesson by bowing slightly from the waist up. Explain that this is how people often greet each other in Japan and Korea. Ask students to explain the importance of sending nonverbal messages that accurately convey the meaning of the verbal message. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Communication happens through actions as well as words, so be aware of your body language.
- If you want to be understood correctly, present the same message with your words and with your body.

## Student Assessment

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1. Why is it important to be aware of your body language?
2. Describe a situation in which body language affects how people interpret what you are saying.
3. Describe a situation in which someone else's body language influenced how you viewed that person.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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"It's not what you say that counts. It's what you don't say!"

Have several students illustrate this phrase by making a statement while using body language that conveys the opposite meaning.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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Have students view news publication photos or books of portrait photography. Have them write down a one-sentence impression of what's happening in each photo.

Then, have students share their responses in small groups and discuss what gave them their impressions.

### Writing in Your Journal

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Have students interview parents or other adults about the positive and negative nonverbal messages they get from their children. Have students write about their findings, citing specific examples if possible.

Have students report their findings to the class. Create two top-10 lists reflecting the most common parent complaints and compliments.

### Using Technology

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Explain to students that American Sign Language is not nonverbal communication, but a true language. Have students use the internet to research American Sign Language.

Have students teach their classmates a few American Sign Language gestures.



## Homework

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Have students observe three ads and identify nonverbal messages in each. Suggest that students try viewing some of the ads with the sound turned off.

Have students discuss how important nonverbal communication is to ads.

## Additional Resources

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Have students read books or watch videos on animal behavior. Have them design posters that explain the meaning of various animal postures (e.g., a dog's raised hackles, bared teeth, wagging tail).

Have students report their findings to a partner and display their posters in the classroom.

# LISTENING

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Message Relay
- Listen Up!
- Message Relay Revisited
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize that good listening skills are important to their success.

Students will identify ways to improve their listening skills.

Students will practice and evaluate the effectiveness of active listening skills.

**Starter (3 minutes)**

Begin this lesson by presenting the class with the following riddle:

A man and his son are in a car accident. They are taken to a hospital where the man is kept in the intensive care unit. As his son is wheeled into the operating room, the surgeon walks in and says, "I can't operate on this boy. He's my son!" How can this be?

Tell students that you will discuss the riddle at the end of class, so they have the entire class period to think about it. Say, "You may have heard what I said when I told you the riddle, but good listening means both hearing and understanding. Today we're going to find out what it takes to listen well."

**Part I Message Relay (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students recognize that listening involves more than hearing, and that good listening skills are important.

**1. Students prepare for the activity.**

Divide the class into groups of six. Select one volunteer from each group to join you at the front of the room.

Explain to everyone that you are going to give the volunteers a message. They will then go back to their groups and whisper that message to one other student. That student will whisper it to another student and so on, until everyone in the group has heard the message. Caution students to listen carefully to the message and repeat it exactly the way they heard it.

**2. Students hear a message and pass it on to others.**

Quietly give the volunteers the following message:

If you see Missy, tell her to pick up the two poodles and the cocker spaniel as she usually does after school. But today, she must also pick up a shepherd named Sam, four terriers all named Joanne, and a Great Dane named Tiny.

Have students return to their groups to pass on the message. Remind them to whisper the message to just one other student in their group.

**3. Students evaluate results.**

When students have finished, ask the last person in each group to repeat the message for the class. After all students have shared, ask the class how many dogs Missy should pick up after school. (Missy should pick up nine dogs.)

After some debate, read the message again to the class and repeat the question. Invite students to make observations about how successfully the message was communicated. Encourage them to explain why it was difficult to get the details of the message straight.

Conclude the activity by making the observation that there's more to listening well than just hearing. Say, "Active listening requires that you pay attention to what is being said, understand it, and then remember it."

## Part II Listen Up! (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students learn how to improve their listening skills.

### 1. Students recognize the importance of active listening.

Point out that it takes at least two people for communication to happen. One person sends a message and another receives it. Write the following equation on the board: "speaker + listener = communication."

Invite a volunteer to help you demonstrate what happens when one of the elements of the equation is missing. Ask the volunteer to give you directions to someplace nearby (e.g., their home, a restaurant, or a store). As the student is speaking, look around the room, make eye contact with another student, pick up something on your desk, bend over to tie your shoe, and so on. When the volunteer is finished, ask:

- Do you think that I heard what you said? Why or why not?
- Do you think that I understood what you told me? Why or why not?
- If I had to follow your directions, do you think that I could get there?

Erase "listener" from the equation on the board. Then, ask if you should erase the word "communication" as well. Ask students to give reasons for their answers.

### 2. Students learn ways to improve their listening skills.

Tell students that there are three simple things they can do to become better listeners and improve their communication skills: focus, confirm, and respond. Write each of these three words on the board as you briefly describe them:

- Focus your attention on the speaker. Let the person know that you are listening. How can you do this? (You can do this nonverbally by nodding and making eye contact. You can also show that you are focusing by not doing something else while the person is talking and by not interrupting.)
- Confirm what you are hearing. You can do this by repeating parts of what the person says or by summarizing what's been said. You can also repeat or summarize silently to yourself.
- Respond to the speaker in some way to show that you have heard and understood what has been said. You might ask questions, make comments, or continue the conversation.

Reiterate that being a good listener is an important key to communication. Rewrite and underline your equation on the board.

### **Part III Message Relay Revisited (15 minutes)**

Purpose: In order to use and evaluate the effectiveness of active listening skills, students repeat the opening activity.

#### **1. Students listen to a brief story and pass it on.**

Tell students that they are going to repeat the activity they did at the beginning of the class. Challenge them to use active listening skills as they listen to a brief story and pass it on to others.

If necessary, review the procedure described for the activity in Part I. Then, divide the class into groups of six and select one member from each group to join you at the front of the room. Quietly share this information with the students who have joined you at the front of the room:

There are 15 passengers on a bus that is heading downtown. At the first stop, four people get off—two women and one man with a baby. At the next stop, four children get off the bus and two men get on. Everyone rides the rest of the way together.

Have students return to their groups to pass the information on. Remind them to whisper the message to just one other student, who in turn will tell another student, and so on. Encourage students to focus, confirm, and respond in order to actively listen to the message.

#### **2. Students evaluate results.**

Ask the last person in each group to repeat the information for everyone to hear. After they have finished, challenge the class to answer these questions:

- Where was the bus going? (Downtown)
- How many passengers were on the bus in the beginning? (15) At the end? (9)
- Do you think you did better at relaying information this time? Why or why not?
- When you were telling the story, did listeners pay better attention to you? Explain.
- When you were telling the story, did anyone confirm information or respond to what you said? If so, how?
- Was it easier to remember details this time?

### 3. Students revisit the riddle from the beginning of class.

Ask volunteers to repeat the riddle you presented at the beginning of class. If necessary, reread the riddle from the starter. Encourage students to offer solutions. (The answer to the riddle is that the surgeon is the boy's mother.)

Make the observation that the riddle is difficult because it plays on a stereotype. Ask if anyone can identify the stereotype. (All surgeons are men.) Point out that the stereotype is further emphasized by the use of only masculine nouns and pronouns in the riddle, which cause us to assume that the surgeon is a man, too. Say, "In addition to listening carefully, it's also important to think about what you hear!"

## Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain the benefits of having good listening skills. Encourage students to work on their listening skills for the rest of the day to see if it helps them communicate better. Ask students to explain whether they think it will be easy or difficult to develop good listening skills. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Being an active listener is a key to good communication.
- To listen actively, focus your attention on the speaker, confirm what you hear, and respond to what is said.

## Student Assessment

1. What is the difference between listening and hearing?
2. List three benefits of being a good listener and three consequences of not being a good listener.
3. List three things you can do to become an active listener.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

“Two great talkers will not travel far together.”

Have students draw cartoons to illustrate the truth of this proverb.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students count off into groups of three. All ones are “sculptures,” twos are “artists,” and threes are “clay.” Have the “sculptures” strike a pose. The “artists” should describe the pose to their “clay,” who must duplicate the pose. The artists can’t look at the clay until the activity is over. The clay may ask the artist questions but may not look at the sculptures. Demonstrate the role of the artist before beginning. Discuss what worked, what didn’t, and why.

### Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about a personal experience in which communication went awry due to poor listening.

Have volunteers share their experiences, omitting identifying details. Brainstorm ways to improve communication in these situations.

### Using Technology

Show students the famous Abbott and Costello sketch “Who’s On First?”

Have students describe how Abbott and Costello show poor listening skills in this sketch.

### Homework

Have students bring in a news article, poem, or other short selection.

Have students read the selection to a partner, who will summarize it by giving important details.

## Additional Resources

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Have a doctor, veterinarian, or salesperson (or anyone else with a job in which communication is key) visit the class and explain how active listening is essential to their work.

Conclude by helping students summarize what they've heard and develop follow-up questions.



## AGENDA

- Starter
- The Latest Word Is...
- Power Check
- In Control
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize the power of their words.

Students will recognize that people are responsible for what they say.

Students will evaluate and choose words to demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between their words and the consequences.

### Materials Needed

- One copy of the “Check Your Grip” activity sheet for each student (Part II)

**Starter (2 minutes)**

Begin class today by writing the following equation on the board: “speaker + listener = communication.” Ask students if they recognize it. Confirm responses that point out that the class talked about this equation, and listening skills in particular, during the last lesson.

Circle the word “speaker” in the equation, and tell students that they’re going to focus on this part of the equation and its importance to communication. Leave the equation on the board for use at the end of the lesson.

**Part I The Latest Word Is... (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students recognize the power of their words.

**1. Students consider the power of a word.**

Tell students to imagine that they saw a shirt or heard a song they especially liked. Ask how they would describe this particular item to a friend. Get them to focus on a single word, such as “cool,” or another word or phrase that is currently popular among your students.

Then, focus on the power of this word by saying, “It matters what word you use. Everyone knows what this word means because everyone uses it to mean the same thing. Do you think people will ever use a different word for that intended meaning?”

**2. Students discuss the ways that language changes.**

Share with students some of the words or phrases that were popular when you were younger, and encourage responses that recognize how strange those words or phrases sound now. Have students think of words or phrases that were popular in the past.

Brainstorm with students a list of currently popular words and phrases, and write student responses on the board. When the list is complete, have students make predictions regarding the words they think will still be popular a generation from now, and those that they think will pass.

**3. Students discuss the power of language.**

Ask students to describe what their choice of words might say about them.

Lead students to realize that what we say gives people an impression about us. Provide students with some examples other than “cool” (e.g., a common regional saying that people from other areas would find odd, a friend who commonly uses academic words). Explain to students that we have the power to affect what people think about us by using words carefully.

Point out that different words are appropriate in different settings. Explain that it is important to know how to use language that is appropriate for the situation. Explain to students that this lesson will help them learn to use words appropriately.

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## Part II Power Check (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that people are responsible for what they say.

### 1. Students listen to a story.

Tell students that you are going to read a short story to them. Explain that they should listen carefully to what the characters say. Read the following story aloud:

Anthony and Thomas are locking their bicycles one morning. They don't see Mike sitting on the grass nearby. Anthony says to Thomas, "You want to do something after school today?"

"I sort of told Mike I'd do something with him," says Thomas.

"Mike? He's such a jerk," says Anthony. "And he dresses like such a dork!"

"Oh yeah?" says Thomas. "Well, I better be going. Bye!"

Later that day in the gym, Anthony waves and runs up to talk to Mike. But Mike walks away, pretending not to see him.

"What's wrong with him?" Anthony says loudly. "What a jerk!"

### 2. Students discuss the story.

Prompt a discussion about the story by asking questions such as the following:

- Why do you think Mike avoids Anthony in the gym? (Mike is angry at Anthony because he heard Anthony calling him names and putting him down earlier in the day.)
- Suppose you were in the gym and saw what happened between Mike and Anthony. Would you side with Anthony? Why or why not?
- Who is responsible for what happened in the gym—Mike or Anthony? Why? (Students should recognize that Anthony is responsible because of what he said about Mike earlier in the day.)
- What were the consequences of Anthony's words in the beginning of the story? What about his words in the gym? (At first, only Thomas and Mike heard Anthony's comment, and it hurt Mike's feelings. Everyone in the gym heard Anthony's comment, and it could affect how they see Anthony or Mike.)
- Do you think Anthony realized the power of his words? Explain your answer.
- What about Thomas? How do you think he handled himself? (Thomas did not defend his friend.)
- What do you think would have happened if Thomas had defended Mike?

Conclude the discussion by saying, "You have the power to speak or not to speak. You have the power to choose what you say and to whom you speak, so be careful and think about the consequences of your words. You must take responsibility for them. Remember that the words that come out of your mouth are yours."

### 3. Students respond to a personal inventory.

Distribute copies of the "Check Your Grip" activity sheet. Assure students that they will not be asked to share any answers with the class, so they should respond to each statement honestly.

After students have finished, point out that people often forget how powerful their words can be and how they can affect others. Suggest that students keep this inventory and look at it occasionally as a reminder of the power that their words have.

## Part III In Control (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students evaluate and choose words to demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between words and consequences.

### 1. Students consider what they have learned about verbal communication.

Introduce this activity by reminding students of the story about Anthony, Thomas, and Mike. Remind them of the power that Anthony's words had: he used them to hurt Mike's feelings and make Mike look bad in front of others. Ask volunteers to recall how Thomas chose to use his words. (Thomas didn't defend his friend.)

### 2. Students apply what they have learned.

Explain to students that they are going to rewrite the story. Ask students to take out a sheet of paper. Have them follow your directions carefully as they revise the story. Explain to students that the directions will be given one at a time, and that they will have an opportunity to write after each direction is given. Remind them to think about the possible consequences of the words they choose before deciding on a response.

Reread the story from Part II out loud. Give each set of directions below, one at a time. Allow students a minute or two to write their responses; then, ask volunteers to share what they wrote. Discuss how the changes affect the rest of the story; then, go on to the next set of directions.

- Thomas tells Anthony that he is planning to do something with Mike after school. Write a different response from Anthony that won't cause any messes. ("Can I come? Let's talk to Mike.")
- Anthony calls Mike a jerk and says that he dresses like a dork. Write a response from Thomas that would also hurt Mike's feelings and maybe even end their friendship. ("Yeah, he is. Maybe I'll just ditch him after school.")
- Anthony calls Mike a jerk and says that he dresses like a dork. Write a response from Thomas that would let Anthony know that he is responsible for his words and that Thomas likes hanging out with Mike. ("He isn't. If you make nasty comments about Mike behind his back, I wonder what you say about me behind my back.")
- In the gym, Mike walks away from Anthony, and Anthony calls him a name. Write a response that would have kept Anthony from making things worse. (Anthony could have said nothing. He also could have gone after Mike and asked him what was wrong. Anthony could have figured out that Mike overheard him talking to Thomas and apologized.)

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**Conclusion** *(3 minutes)*

Refer to the equation on the board, and ask students to identify who they think has the most power in this equation—the speaker or the listener. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Words are very powerful, so use them wisely.
- You must take responsibility for your words because they belong to you.

**Student Assessment** 

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1. Describe a situation in which you said something that you wished you could take back. Why did you want to take it back?
2. How does your use of words influence what others think about you?
3. Describe a situation in which the words someone uses have a negative effect. Then, rewrite the situation, making the person use words that have a positive effect.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

Have students come up with other word pairs that are near misses and create illustrations of both the “right” and the “almost right” word.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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Have students play password, a vocabulary game that requires teams with two players each. Give a “password” (printed on a card) to one member of each team. Have them take turns giving one-word clues to their partners. Each password is worth 10 points when it’s given out, decreasing one point as each clue is given. There are no penalties for guessing incorrectly.

Have students discuss how they had to be careful with their words in this game.

### Writing in Your Journal

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Have students write about a time when someone else’s words hurt them.

Have the class role-play similar incidents and suggest better ways of communicating.

### Using Technology

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Have students read the slang dictionary at <https://www.verywellfamily.com/a-teen-slang-dictionary-2610994>.

As a class, generate a list of slang terms and their definitions to add to this dictionary.

## Homework

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Have students research countries in which freedom of speech is banned. They should identify the consequences for speaking freely in these countries.

Have students report their findings to the class. Explain that having freedom of speech means that we have the responsibility of choosing our words carefully.

## Additional Resources

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Obtain copies of the *Reader's Digest* magazine. Have students take the "Word Power" vocabulary quiz, which is included in each issue.

Have students keep a list of words and definitions they'd like to add to their vocabulary. Have them commit to using a new word on their list each day.



# CHECK YOUR GRIP

Check whether you agree or disagree with each statement below. Then follow the directions at the bottom of the page to rate how well you understand the power of your words.

	AGREE	DISAGREE
Hearing angry words first thing in the morning can ruin my day.		
Words of praise always make me feel great!		
I know I can upset someone by calling him or her a name.		
Compliments usually embarrass me, but I like them anyway.		
It's sometimes easier to blame someone else than to explain what really happened.		
I hate how it feels when someone puts me down.		
I know it hurts others when I put them down.		
Sometimes I say things that I don't mean.		
It's usually better to say hello than to pretend you don't see someone.		
It's always better to say, "Excuse me," than to say, "Get out of my way."		
I can use words to make someone smile.		
I sometimes find it difficult to say what I mean.		
I can be nice with words.		
I can be mean with words.		
<b>TOTAL</b>		

Add the number of checks in the "Agree" column, and write the total at the bottom. Then match your score with one of the ratings below. Your rating will tell you how well you understand the power of words.

11-14 = TOTALLY IN TOUCH  
 7-10 = PRETTY GOOD GRASP OF IT  
 4-6 = BARELY IN TOUCH  
 0-3 = DON'T HAVE A CLUE

# BEING ASSERTIVE

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## AGENDA

- SESSION 1
  - Starter
  - The Split
  - Action/Reaction
- SESSION 2
  - Review
  - More Action/Reaction
  - Pass Me the Comics, Please
  - Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will develop definitions and examples of passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors.

Students will learn how to use assertive behavior to communicate more effectively.

### Materials Needed

- Session 1: Two sheets of newspaper for each pair of students (Part I)
- Session 1: Three pages from a flip chart for students' writing (Part II)
- Session 1: Three dictionaries (Part II)

- Session 2: Three flip chart pages of notes from Session 1 (Part I)
- Session 2: One sheet of drawing paper for each student (Part I)
- Session 2: Sheet of drawing paper for each group of three - four students; colored pencils (Part III)

## SESSION 1

### Starter (3 minutes)

Read a book or a magazine as you enter your classroom. If you are already in the room as students arrive, read at your desk. Ignore all attempts by students to get your attention. Let your behavior send the message that you are totally absorbed in your reading and that you do not want to be disturbed. When everyone is seated, ask:

- Did you all feel welcomed as you came into class today? Why or why not?
- What other messages did I send to you through my behavior?
- Did anyone feel that I was being rude? Explain.

Tell students that over the next two class periods, they will explore how people communicate different messages through their behavior.

### Part I The Split (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students perform a task in order to conceptualize passive and aggressive behaviors.

#### 1. Students participate in an activity.

Have students work in pairs to perform a simple task. Give each pair of students a sheet of newspaper; then, give the following directions:

- Each of you must hold one corner of the paper. Whether you hold corners on the same or on opposite sides of the paper is up to you and your partner.
- The paper represents a pizza that you will have for lunch today (or dinner tonight). Since there are two of you, you must split the pizza between you.
- Each of you has the same goal—to tear off as much of the pizza as you can.

Tell students to begin.

#### 2. Students make observations about the activity.

Prompt volunteers to discuss the activity by asking questions such as the following:

- Raise your hand if you ended up with the larger piece. How did your partner feel about that?
- Raise your hand if you ended up with the smaller piece. How did your partner feel about that?
- What did you do during the activity to get the smaller or larger piece?

Call on volunteers to explain what they did, encouraging them to demonstrate their actions. Afterward, suggest that it might be helpful if students repeated the task to refresh their memories. Tell them to think about what they are doing as they divide the paper this time.

### **3. Students repeat the activity and observe it more closely.**

Distribute a second set of newspaper sheets to the same pairs of students and have them recreate their actions. Afterward, invite volunteers to now tell how they got either the larger or the smaller pieces. If students have attempted to change the results this time, ask for a show of hands from those who were successful. Call on a few students who raised their hands to explain what they did to change the results.

Summarize the activity by pointing out that everyone uses different behaviors to achieve goals in different situations. Sometimes, these behaviors come out in actions or words.

## **Part II Action/Reaction (25 minutes)**

Purpose: Students work in groups to develop definitions and examples of passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors.

### **1. Students learn about different types of behavior.**

Tell students that their behavior can send different messages to people. These messages can, in turn, generate different reactions or responses. Explain to students that they are going to look at three different types of behavior, the messages they send, and the responses they are likely to get. Write the words “Types of Behavior” on the board. Tape three pages from a flip chart below this heading, and write at the tops of these pages the words “Passive,” “Aggressive,” and “Assertive.” (You will need to save these pages for use in the next session.) Ask students if they have heard these words before.

### **2. Students work in groups to develop definitions and examples.**

Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the words. Make sure each group has either a dictionary or access to an online dictionary. Explain that the groups have two tasks:

- They must create a definition of their word that is meaningful to their group.
- They must also generate three or four examples of this kind of behavior. They may use their experiences with the activity from Part I as examples.

You might wish to time this activity, allowing about 10 minutes for students to complete group work and about five minutes for each group to share their findings, as outlined on the next page.

### **3. Students share and explore their definitions and examples.**

Ask groups to share their work with the whole class. Invite one group at a time to explain what its word means, write its word's definition in the appropriate column on the board, and give examples of the type of behavior it is defining.

After each group has presented, encourage students to ask questions, clarify information, or add examples of their own. Lead students to recognize the following:

- “Passive” means “not active; only acted upon.” Using soft or inaudible tones of voice, avoiding eye contact, slouching, and using other methods of acting or speaking that say “I can’t,” “I don’t know,” “I don’t care,” or “Don’t look at me” are all characteristics of passive behavior.
- Ask, “When someone uses passive behavior around you or toward you, how do you react?”
- “Aggressive” means “ready to start fights or quarrels; very active or bold.” Using loud or angry tones of voice, pushing into another person’s personal space, using physical or verbal intimidation, and using other methods of acting or speaking that say “Look at me,” “Listen to me,” “Do it my way,” or “Get out of my way” are all characteristics of aggressive behavior.
- Ask, “When someone uses aggressive behavior around you or toward you, how do you react?”
- “Assertive” means “clearly and positively; in a confident manner.” Using calm and steady tones of voice, maintaining eye contact, keeping a straight posture, and using other methods of acting or speaking that say “I know who I am,” “I know what I’m doing,” “I’m interested in who you are,” or “I respect you as a person” are all characteristics of assertive behavior.
- Ask, “When someone uses assertive behavior around you or toward you, how do you react?”

Encourage students to draw conclusions about each of the three types of behavior. Ask them to identify which behavior they think would send the most positive message and get the most positive response from others.

Summarize the discussion by stating that passive and aggressive behaviors are more likely than assertive behavior to lead to negative consequences or reactions from others. In general, assertive behavior is more effective.

Tell students that they will continue to work on assertive behavior in the next session. Remember to save the three pages of definitions that are posted on your board for use in the next session.

## SESSION 2

### Part I Review (8 minutes)

Tape the three flip chart pages from the last period on the board, under the heading “Types of Behavior.” Ask students to briefly recall what they did in the last class period.

Distribute pieces of drawing paper, and invite students to think about the three types of behavior they learned about. Tell students to divide their papers into three parts and make drawings that express how each of these three behaviors “looks” or “feels” to them. Suggest that they use color, images, or words to express their interpretation of each behavior.

Circulate among students as they work. When they have finished, make a few comments or observations of what you have seen. For example, you might say the following:

- The sections that represent passive behaviors are the least interesting.
- The sections that express aggression are the darkest and most off-putting.
- Those that represent assertive behavior are the most inviting and appealing.

### Part II More Action/Reaction (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students learn how to use assertive behavior to communicate more effectively.

#### 1. Students focus on assertive behavior.

Ask a volunteer to describe the activity from Part I of Session 1. (Pairs of students divided a sheet of newspaper that represented a pizza.) Ask students to think about how the activity might work if both people involved in dividing the paper used assertive behavior. Ask:

How might the people act? (They would appear confident, speak calmly to each other, use eye contact and good posture, and be respectful of their partner.)

How do you think the paper might be divided in the end? Why? (The paper would probably be divided fairly equally because the people involved would have negotiated equal shares, since each wanted as much as possible from the split.)

#### 2. Students identify ways to communicate assertively.

Focus attention on the flip chart pages displayed on the board. Remind students that passive and aggressive behaviors are more likely than assertive behavior to lead to negative consequences or reactions from others. Explain that assertive behavior is the best way to communicate what you want. It is the most effective way to achieve your goals.

Invite students to compile a list of tips for being assertive. Have volunteers write the suggestions in a list on the board. Although your list will include specific actions and words, it should cover the following general ideas:

- Use words that show you are responsible for what you are saying.
- Be sure that your body language and your words are sending the same message.
- Say what you want or need clearly and calmly.
- Think about what the other person wants or needs.
- Use good listening skills and ask questions.

### **Part III Pass Me the Comics, Please (25 minutes)**

Purpose: Through the creation of comics, students identify and apply different types of behavior.

#### **1. Students begin the activity.**

Divide students into groups of three or four. Ask students to name a few examples of single-frame comics. (Student responses may include *Family Circus* or *Marmaduke*.)

After groups have been formed, give the following directions:

- Each group will create three single-frame comics, one for each type of behavior we discussed.
- Draw comics showing how different characters would deal with a problem passively, aggressively, and assertively.
- Each member of the group has an equal say in what will be drawn.
- Afterward, each group will display its comics around the classroom. Students will then walk around and identify the behavior depicted in each comic.
- Before the period is over, each group will explain its comics.

#### **2. Students create their comics.**

Give groups about 15 minutes to plan and draw their comics. Suggest that they write notes as they develop each comic. They will use their notes to explain their comics to the class.

If students are in need of ideas, suggest that they review the information about the three types of behavior displayed on the board. If students seem unable to focus or move along, suggest that they keep their comics simple and to the point.

#### **3. Students display their comics.**



Ask students to hang their comics on the wall closest to where they are sitting. Have them place a piece of paper by each comic.

After all of the comics are displayed, ask students to walk around the classroom and view the drawings. Instruct students to look at each comic carefully. They should then identify the type of behavior depicted by the comic and write it on the paper.

#### **4. Students explain their comics.**

Use the remainder of the class period for groups to explain their comics to the class. Have groups retrieve the papers that they placed near each of their comics. Ask groups how many people were able to identify the behaviors depicted in their drawings. Have groups explain their comics to the rest of the class.

**Conclusion** *(2 minutes)*

Ask students to explain why they are more likely to get a positive response from others when they use assertive behavior as opposed to passive or aggressive behavior. Ask students to describe passive and aggressive behaviors. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Assertive behavior is the most effective way to achieve your goals.
- Be assertive by speaking clearly, calmly, confidently, and respectfully.
- Be assertive by sending the same message both verbally and nonverbally.
- Be assertive by using good listening skills.

**Student Assessment****SESSION 1**

1. Define “passive behavior.” Give an example.
2. Define “aggressive behavior.” Give an example.
3. Define “assertive behavior.” Give an example.

**SESSION 2**

1. List three ways you can demonstrate assertive behavior.
2. Why will regularly demonstrating assertive behavior, rather than passive or aggressive behavior, make it easier to achieve your goals?
3. Describe a situation in your life in which you used either passive, aggressive, or assertive behavior. Explain why you were or were not happy with the situation’s outcome and what you would do differently now.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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"I refused to take no for an answer."

Ask students whether this is an example of aggressive or assertive behavior. Have them explain their thinking.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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Have each student choose a person whose contribution has somehow changed their life (e.g., an artist, historical figure, scientist, friend). Have each student create an exhibit or performance that honors their chosen person's achievements.

Have each student write a brief biography that reveals assertive moments in their honoree's life.

### Writing in Your Journal

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Have students write about a time when they achieved positive results by being direct and assertive. (If students haven't had much success in this area, have them write about how they could change an existing situation by using assertive behavior.)

Have students share their experiences with a partner.

### Using Technology

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Have students select and read a speech from American Rhetoric's "Online Speech Bank" at [www.americanrhetoric.com/speechbank.htm](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speechbank.htm). Have students discuss the role of assertive behavior in delivering a speech.

## Homework

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Have students write letters of complaint to a manufacturer regarding a faulty product, or to a government representative regarding a social issue. Remind students to make their letters assertive in tone.

Have students work with a partner to critique each other's letters and ensure that the letters are assertive.

## Additional Resources

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Have students read *Stick Up for Yourself!* by Gershen Kaufman, Lev Raphael, and Pamela Espeland.

When they are finished, discuss the role that assertiveness plays in boosting self-esteem and improving one's life.

# EXPRESSING OPINIONS CONSTRUCTIVELY

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- Why a Debate?
- How Will It Work?
- Express Yourself!
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize that it is possible to communicate productively when disagreeing with others.

Students will participate in a debate, using effective communication skills to express and listen to opinions.

### Materials Needed

- A place to display the rules for the debate (Part II)

**Starter (3 minutes)**

Begin by sharing with students the following joke about miscommunication. Use gestures and tone of voice to illustrate the story:

Two students are riding home on the bus one day. Suddenly, one of them points out the window and exclaims, "Look at that dog with one eye!" The other student quickly covers one eye and says, "Where? I don't see a dog!"

Point out that even when people are communicating well, sometimes misunderstandings can still occur. Say, "This doesn't happen on purpose, and it isn't done to mislead or hurt anyone. When misunderstandings happen, remember to laugh. Keep this advice in mind as we put our communication skills to the test today."

**Part I Why a Debate? (5 minutes)**

Purpose: Students recognize that it is possible to communicate productively when disagreeing with others.

**1. Students discuss the nature and purpose of a debate.**

Ask students to explain what a debate is. After a few responses, focus on important points by asking questions such as the following:

- Is an argument the same as a debate? (An argument is usually a private, informal discussion between two people about something personal. A debate is more formal in that it has rules and is usually a public event.)
- What is the purpose of a debate? (The purpose of a debate is to give or express reasons for and against something, and present both sides of an issue.)
- What debates have you heard or seen? Can you think of any examples of a debate? (Most students will probably cite candidates running for public office who have debated each other.)
- How would you describe the types of behavior normally exhibited by participants in a debate? (Participants in a debate are mindful of the debate's rules, respect differing opinions, and calmly explain their side of the issue.)

**2. Students consider the concept of friendly disagreements.**

Ask students if they think it is possible to communicate effectively even when they disagree with someone. Encourage students to explain their answers, prompting them to give reasons and cite examples.

Guide students to the understanding that assertive behaviors would allow them to communicate effectively in such situations. If necessary, remind them that passive and aggressive behaviors can sometimes produce negative reactions in other people. Ask volunteers to explain why.

## **Part II    How Will It Work? (10 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students choose a topic to debate and become familiar with rules for the debate.

### **1. Students choose a topic.**

Explain that students are going to conduct a debate in class today. Point out that before the class can debate, they must decide on an issue to discuss.

Read the list of statements below one at a time, asking for a show of hands after each one from students who agree and disagree. Ask volunteers to write each statement number on the board, along with the number of students who agree and disagree.

1. Students should be required to wear uniforms to school.
2. Schools should be able to perform random locker searches for drugs and weapons.
3. Students who get in trouble with the law off school grounds should be expelled.
4. Boys and girls should be allowed to try out for and play on any school sports team.
5. Students who fail classes should be promoted to the next grade.
6. Schools and libraries should block parts of the internet on computers used by young people.
7. Children should be allowed to see any movie they choose, including R-rated movies.
8. Animals should be left to live in their natural habitats, not kept in zoos or circuses.

Explain that the class will debate the topic that has the most even number of students agreeing and disagreeing. If necessary, conduct another vote to break ties, flip a coin, or draw statements from a hat.

### **2. Students review rules for the debate.**

Explain that during the debate, students will need to communicate their thoughts and opinions in the most effective way possible. They will also need to listen carefully to the opinions of others in order to formulate a response. In order to do this, everyone must follow some basic rules.

Display the following list of rules, which you have prepared as a poster or transparency before class. Read through them aloud, or call on a volunteer to read each one:

- Only one person may speak at a time.
- Speakers must alternate from one side to the other.
- If you want to make a point, you must raise your hand and wait to be called on.
- You cannot raise your hand until the person who is speaking has finished.
- If someone on the other side makes a point you agree with, you must get out of your seat and move to the other side. This does not mean that you have permanently changed sides; this means only that you agree with one particular point. When someone on the other side (that is, your original side) makes a point that you agree with, return to your seat.

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### **Part III Express Yourself! (30 minutes)**

Purpose: Students participate in a debate, using effective communication skills to express and listen to opinions.

#### **1. Students prepare for the debate.**

Direct students to assist you with lining up chairs to form two rows facing each other. Remember that students will be moving back and forth between rows, so be sure that there are no obstacles to block their way.

Read aloud the statement that the class will debate, and write it prominently on the board. Have all students who agree with the statement sit in one row, and those who disagree sit in the other row.

#### **2. Students participate in the debate.**

Begin the debate by asking, “Who has an opinion about this statement?” Call on a student who has a hand raised.

As the debate coach, it is important that you enforce the rules by letting only one student talk at a time, calling on students from alternating sides, calling only on those who wait until others stop talking before raising their hand, and reminding students to change sides when they agree with points made by someone on the other side.

It is also important that you do not offer an opinion or take sides on the topic. Be sure to keep the discussion on track, and keep individual students from dominating the discussion. Give students a one-minute warning before ending the debate. (Allow about 10 minutes of class time for the final discussion.)

#### **3. Students reflect on their experience.**

When the debate is finished, have students discuss their experience. Ask questions such as the following to prompt them:



- How was this debate different from disagreements you have in everyday life?
- What did you find difficult about the debate?
- What behaviors did you find most effective in communicating your opinion?
- What behaviors did you find most frustrating when listening to others?
- Did you change your mind about anything during the debate?
- Was it difficult to remember to use assertive behavior during the debate? If so, why do you think it was difficult?

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain the benefits of practicing assertive behavior during disagreements. Ask students to describe effective communication skills. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Effective communication skills are necessary when expressing your opinions.
- You can improve your communication skills by using them.

### Student Assessment

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1. What are some things you can do to keep a friendly disagreement from becoming an argument?
2. In what ways was the controlled debate different from disagreements you have in your life?
3. What did you find frustrating about the debate? What did you find interesting or helpful?

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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“The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right place, but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.”

Discuss how choosing words carefully is important to expressing opinions constructively. Have students give examples of situations in which it is important for them to be careful with their words.

### Core Content Curriculum Connection

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Have students research the perspectives of participants in their current social studies unit.

Select an issue relevant to the time period being studied. Have students debate the issue from the perspective of the people researched.

### Writing in Your Journal

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Explain that adults often write down notes before important business phone calls, especially if the topic is potentially stressful. Have students make notes for a conversation they'd like/need to have.

Have students practice their conversations with a classmate until they're able to make their points assertively.

### Using Technology

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Have students visit [www.c-span.org](http://www.c-span.org) and watch a Congressional debate. Have them write a paragraph summarizing what was discussed.

Have students meet in small groups to discuss the Congressional conduct they observed. How did the congresspeople express their differences? What nonverbal communication was observed?

## Homework

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Have students collect “letters to the editor” from a news source that pertain to a single subject. Have them underline key phrases that give clues to each writer’s tone.

Have students share their letters with partners or in small groups, discussing which letters were most effective and why.

## Additional Resources

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Show the 1957 version of the film *12 Angry Men*, which is about jurors debating the fate of a boy accused of killing his father.

After showing the film, have students discuss the communication styles of the various characters.