

Communication Skills in Action

Workplace Readiness Training Benchmark:

Develop communication skills needed to succeed in a professional environment.

Note to those providing service:

These activities are developed in a way that allows the learner to gradually build upon their skills. Each student has different foundational skills so some students may need more support or instruction than others. With that being said, you can choose what activity you start with based on your learner's strengths and needs.



Extended Pathways

Students who are interested or enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) or postsecondary education, regardless of disability (remember to presume competence!), may or may not need some of the information that seems introductory in nature. Take as much or little time as needed based on student knowledge. More specific activities related to CTE and postsecondary education are identified as extended activities and pathways.

Preparation and Materials Needed:

- Know the student's knowledge or awareness regarding communication skills (this helps with knowing how much time you may need to spend on an activity)
- Prepare needed assistive technologies and/or accommodations (ex: communication supports (visual, objects, pictures, voice output devices, etc.), physical supports/space access needs, vision supports, hearing supports, sensory needs/supports).
- Computer to access videos. Print materials in advance if necessary.



Print

- [Skill Assessment for Cell Phone and Email](#)
- [Setting Up a Voicemail Script](#)
- [Write it Right: Email Tips](#)
- [Casual vs Formal](#)
- [Fix the Sentence](#)
- [Formal Scripts for Different Scenarios](#)
- [Phone Calls Scenario Cards](#)

Activities to Meet Benchmarks:

Activity 1: Cell Phone and Email Assessment

This activity aims to assess cell phone and email skills.



Discuss: Being able to clearly communicate with others is an essential skill that can make a huge difference in school, work, and everyday life. This includes being able to communicate through email and phone. Whether you're applying for a job, asking a professor a question, or scheduling an appointment, how you communicate matters. These skills are important when looking for work and when you're working. Often, interviews are set up via email, phone calls or text messages so making sure that you are equipped with the skills to use your phone, and email is going to be key.

To see what supports you may need, we first need to figure out what skills you have and what skills you want to work on. This assessment will help provide a comprehensive view of each student's current abilities and areas where they want to improve. *[Note to Instructors: you can then use this information to create targeted lessons or provide individualized support. Feel free to adapt these assessments to better fit the needs of your learner(s) and take skills off or add skills that you feel are needed to make the assessment more compressive.]*



Resource: [Skill Assessment for Cell Phone and Email](#). This assessment can be completed by the student or anyone who supports the student's learning. It can also be used as an interactive activity, where the student attempts each skill while someone observes and provides guidance as needed. This approach offers a more accurate understanding of the student's current abilities and areas for growth. This is just a tool to help you better assess a student's understanding and desire.

Depending on the results of the assessment here are various activities to support any student needs.

- **Voice Mail Set Up:** [Setting Up a Voicemail Script](#) offers a couple voicemail scripts and space for students to write their own. Assist students in doing this on their personal devices or provide them with directions to do it at home with their caregivers.
 - [iPhone Voice Mail Set Up](#)
 - [Android Voice Mail Set Up](#)
- **Email Set Up:** Help students set up a professional email account if they don't already have one. Use a free service like Gmail or Outlook.
 - [Gmail Set Up](#)
 - [Outlook Set Up](#)

- **Checking Voice Mails, Texts and Emails:** Help students build healthy habits of checking their voicemails, texts, and emails. Leave a voicemail, send a text message, or email to the student asking for a response (E.g., request they bring an item to the next meeting (pen, notebook, their favorite book, etc.), or request a specific reply (repeating a phrase, answering a question, etc.).
- **Compose an Email:** Assist students in composing emails for various real-life scenarios and send them to you. Review these emails together and provide constructive feedback to help them improve. [Write it Right: Email Tips](#) has sample email scenarios, or feel free to create your own.

Activity 2: Casual vs Formal Communication

This activity aims to explore the difference between casual and formal communication.



Discuss: There are many ways that you can communicate with those around you. You can make phone calls, send text messages, write letters, send emails and have face to face conversations. No matter what mode of communication you use, you need to shift your style of communication based on the audience you are addressing, the situation you are in, or even the topic you are discussing.

To practice, let's take turns sharing what we did over the weekend. The information you would provide your friends with is going to have more details. The information you would share with the teacher or instructor will be a shorter version of your weekend or more "high level". *[Note to Instructors: Consider modeling by giving an example of how you would explain your weekend to a friend vs how you would share it with a professional or boss.]*

Here's an example if needed:

- Telling a friend about their weekend: "This past weekend I went to the arcade with Emery and Lance. It was so fun. Lance beat Emery in Skee-Ball, and I played so much pop-a-shot. We were able to get so many tickets and we each got to pick out different prizes! We should all go next weekend! You would have so much fun."
- Telling a teacher or instructor about their weekend: "I went to the arcade with some friends, and we played some games. It was cool."



Review: It is helpful to know what is considered casual communication and what is considered formal communication. It's important to take time to practice formal communication skills since this is helpful when talking with an instructor, professor, or employer. Below are two options to practice these skills based on This is a starting point to make a goal. To reach a goal, you must plan. We have several worksheet options to help you plan to reach your goal.

Option 1: [Casual vs Formal](#). This activity has various phrases. Consider if they are casual phrases, like things you would say to friends that may have slang words, inside jokes, emojis, or abbreviations. Or are they more formal phrases like how you would communicate with a supervisor or co-worker that has complete sentences, punctuation, or greetings.

Option 2: [Fix the Sentence](#). Students can take casual phrases and rewrite them into a more professional tone like how they would speak with a supervisor or sending a formal email. [Formal Scripts for Different Scenarios](#) is available for those needing more support.



Reflect: The way we communicate at work can shape how others perceive us, including our supervisors, co-workers, and even customers. Using professional language shows respect, responsibility, and confidence, while overly casual communication might make you seem unprofessional or unprepared. Let's reflect on what we've learned. Consider the following questions and think about how you can apply these skills in a real workplace setting.

- Why is it important to use professional language in the workplace?
- How might using informal language affect how you are perceived by a boss or co-worker?
- What are some strategies you can use to make sure your workplace communication is professional?

Activity 3: Practicing Communication

This activity aims to practice phone call scenarios.



Discuss: You've spent time learning how to adjust your communication style depending on who you're speaking or writing to, especially in a workplace setting. In many jobs, communication isn't just about texting or emailing, communication can often happen over the phone. Whether you're calling off work, running late, scheduling an interview, or speaking with a supervisor, knowing how to make a professional phone call is an important workplace skill. Today, you'll have the opportunity to practice making phone calls for common workplace situations. You'll take turns acting as the caller and the manager or co-worker, ensuring that your tone, word choice, and clarity reflect professional communication. Let's start by reviewing basic phone etiquette. When on the phone we want to:

- Speak clearly and professionally.
- Use appropriate greetings and closings.
- Provide necessary details (name, reason for calling, date, time, etc.).
- Listen carefully and respond appropriately.



Resource: [Phone Calls Scenario Cards](#) includes various scenarios from calling in sick to scheduling an interview. Students can take turns acting as the caller and manager or coworker.



Reflect: It is not unusual to feel uncomfortable talking on the phone. This is another skill that takes practice. Take time after being the caller or the manager / coworker to reflect on these questions:

- What was the most challenging part of making a professional phone call?
- How did it feel to use formal language versus casual language?
- What strategies helped you stay professional and clear?
- How can this skill help you in a real workplace?



Wrap-Up

You have learned many communication skills. As you move forward, think about how you can apply these skills in real-life situations. Whether it's practicing clear and respectful conversations, double-checking emails before sending them, or speaking confidently on the phone, every small improvement will help you in school, jobs, and daily life. Consider a brief self-reflection. What is one communication skill you feel confident in? And what is one skill you want to improve?