



## SOLUTION SEEKER ACTIVITY

# Adaptable Communication

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- **Explore** concepts related to communication.
- **Consider** how to adapt their communication style and technique based on restraints.
- **Apply** and test different communication strategies and provide suggestions for improvement.

## OVERARCHING QUESTION

How can we modify our communication to be as effective as possible, given constraints?

## STANDARDS

### ITEEA Standards for Technological Literacy

- **Standard 1: Scope of Technology**  
In order to comprehend the scope of technology, students in grades 6–8 should learn that:
  - **F.** New products and systems can be developed to solve problems or to help do things that could not be done without the help of technology
  - **G.** The development of technology is a human activity and is the result of individual or collective needs and the ability to be creative.
- **Standard 17: Information and Communication Technologies**  
In order to select, use, and understand information and communication technologies, students in grades 6–8 should learn that:
  - **K.** The use of symbols, measurements, and drawings promotes clear communication by providing a common language to express ideas.

### Common Core English Language Arts

- **Writing:**
  - **W.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **Speaking and Listening:**
  - **SL.1:** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - **SL.2:** Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**Instructional Note:**

The following activity has been designed so you can tailor it to your current mode of instruction.

- The *Introduce* and *View & Reflect* sections can be presented in-person, virtually, by video, or through a shared document.
- The *Challenge* section is designed for students to complete independently at home or school, using the accompanying *Challenge* handout. Students can fill print and fill out the handout, or answer the questions separately in a format that can be shared with you.
- The *Conclude* section can be completed in several ways. This activity can be incorporated at any point during the school day during remote learning. If school is back to in-person learning, students could complete this portion of the activity virtually as homework, access their virtual learning platform and communicate with a peer from across the classroom, or even pretend to be communicating through a screen as they sit across from each other.

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

### Introduce

1. Begin with a one-minute partner brainstorm. Write “effective communication” on the board and challenge pairs to jot down everything that comes to mind when they see this term.
2. When one minute is up, invite pairs to summarize what they brainstormed to create a definition of the term.
3. Invite pairs to share the definition they developed. Once students have shared, summarize the student responses by explaining that communication is the giving, receiving, or exchange of ideas. When communication is effective, these ideas are given and received clearly, concisely, and without confusion.
4. Then write the following question on the board and challenge the class to consider: Can effective communication take different forms? Why or why not?
5. After hearing students' thoughts, wrap up by explaining that the class is about to watch a video about Aaron Byers who is a Global Products Researcher at Proctor & Gamble. Communication is an important component of Aaron's job, and students will see if how she communicates has changed or stayed the same during COVID-19!

### View & Reflect

1. As students watch the video, encourage them to keep the focus question (“Can effective communication take different forms?”) in mind.
2. When the video is complete, encourage students to find their partners from the first brainstorm activity.
3. On a piece of scrap paper, instruct each pair to create a tic-tac-toe board and decide who will be the X and who will be the O.

4. Then explain that pairs will play a game of tic-tac-toe with the addition of the following rules:
  - Each time a student plays, they must answer the focus question with a “yes” or “no” *and* provide a supporting reason from the video.
  - Students must listen to their partners and ensure each reason is unique. If a student repeats a reason that has already been shared, their turn will be skipped!
5. When most pairs have finished playing, encourage them to show you with a head nod or shake: Can effective communication take different forms?
6. Invite a couple of students to elaborate on their answers. Then ensure students understand that to be effective, communication must be adapted to the environment and situation in which it takes place! During COVID-19, in-person communication—which is often the most effective type of communication—was usually not an option. Therefore, communicators like Aaron Byers had to adapt their communication to find the next-best way to communicate effectively!

## CHALLENGE

1. Explain that, like Aaron Byers had to figure out how to communicate with Herbal Essences consumers from afar, the class will now take on a similar communication challenge. More specifically: Each student will be challenged to teach a peer in 10 minutes or less how to do their favorite afterschool activity... from a distance!
2. Distribute the *Challenge* handout to each student. Review the instructions together and be sure students understand that they will eventually be using these plans to communicate their ideas to their peers.

## CONCLUDE

1. Provide time for student pairs to use their communication plans to teach each other about their activity. Refer to the Instructional Notes included on Page 1 for ideas on how to tailor this to your current mode of instruction.
2. Then wrap up with a full-class discussion around the communication strategies that the students employed. Consider: What strategies made it easy to communicate ideas? What barriers or challenges continued to stand in the way? How could students have communicated differently for better results? Be sure to hear from both the communicator and the learner as you analyze successes and areas for growth!

**Directions:** Read the Background section below to learn about different types of communication. Then complete Parts 1 and 2 as you consider how you could teach your favorite afterschool activity to a peer from a distance if in-person communication was not possible.

### Communication Background

There are several ways to communicate with those around us. Each of the communication types below can function on its own or can be paired with others.

- **Verbal Communication** uses speech and language (i.e., your voice) to share a message. While it traditionally includes in-person communication and phone calls, video conferencing is now also a common form of verbal communication. In-person communication is considered the most personal form of verbal communication, and it allows you to effectively communicate both verbally and nonverbally (as described below) with those in front of you.
- **Nonverbal Communication** relies on everything but words to relay your thoughts. Your body language (gestures and posture), facial expressions (eyes and mouth), eye contact, and even your appearance are capable of transmitting messages without words. This type of communication is especially effective at showing your level of interest and energy, as well as your emotions.
- **Written Communication** uses handwritten or typed words to convey a message. It includes everything from emails and letters to texting, messaging, stories, articles, and more. Written communication can be formal or informal. It can be especially effective when delivering detailed information that is important to remember.
- **Visual Communication** relays messages through photographs, art, drawings, charts, graphs, etc., or—in other words—information that can be seen. Visuals are often used to support verbal or written communication, especially when sharing information that can be hard to describe in words.

## Part 1: Determine What to Communicate

What's your favorite afterschool activity? It could be a sport, hobby, game, art activity, musical instrument, etc.

Once you have an activity in mind, record it below. Then brainstorm the top 5–10 things you would need to teach a peer for them to give it a try. Assume they know nothing about this activity and think about the information you would have to communicate to help them begin!

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

## Part 2: Determine How to Communicate

In-person, face-to-face communication is usually the easiest and most effective way to teach someone something new because you can employ all types of communication and even physically guide them if needed!

However, when in-person communication is *not* an option, you must consider the alternatives. Use the prompts on the following page to develop a plan that details exactly how you would teach a peer to participate in your activity without being at their side.

**Instructions:** If you can't be next to your peer, how can you teach them to participate in your activity?

1. Develop a plan below that communicates (in 10 minutes or less) how to participate in this activity! Your plan must include at least one written or one visual form of communication.
2. Once your plan is written, create the accompanying written and/or visual material(s) on the following page.

| <p><b><u>What</u> will you communicate?</b></p> <p>A brief example has been included for you, but be sure to include more details in your response.</p>   | <p><b><u>How</u> will you communicate this information?</b></p> <p>Include the type of communication you will use (verbal, non-verbal, written, or visual) as well as the specific technique.</p>   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>For example:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>First, I will explain why soccer is my favorite sport.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Next, I will explain three of the most important rules that every player must know:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Rule #1</i></li> <li>b. <i>Rule #2</i></li> <li>c. <i>Rule #3</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>3. <i>Finally, I will explain the different parts of the soccer field.</i></li> </ol> | <p><i>For example:</i></p> <p><i>I will communicate using video conferencing, which allows me to communicate verbally and nonverbally.</i></p> <p><i>I will supplement this communication with the following examples of visual communication:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I will use YouTube to share a clip from a famous soccer game when I explain that soccer is my favorite sport.</i></li> <li>• <i>I will also create a diagram of a soccer field to help me explain the different parts of the field.</i></li> </ul> |
| Empty space for student response  | Empty space for student response  |

**Supportive Material:** Use the space below to create the visual and/or written communication material(s) that you mentioned on the previous page. Be sure to consider exactly what you want your peer to learn from this material so you can communicate as clearly as possible!