

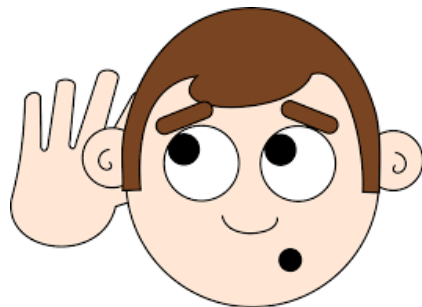
Put on Your Listening Ears



Have you wondered why your teacher and your family say that the most successful people on the world possess effective communication skills? Although you may hear this, do you really know what are effective communication skills? What is the importance of having effective communication skills during your mission?

A Communication Officer for NASA must have effective communication skills. During any NASA mission, the flow of information from one person to the next is key to a successful mission. It is impossible for one individual to do every job on the mission by himself or herself. He or she will need guidance and instructions from everyone else on the team.

As the Communication Officer, you work closely with every team to make sure that messages are received and delivered promptly, concisely and clearly. You are responsible for sending and receiving written and oral messages. The messages must be relayed to the appropriate team in a fast and accurate manner. The team members receiving the messages must be able to interpret them correctly to complete their jobs during the mission.



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Teachers Information:

This activity is excellent for developing students' communication skills. It demonstrates the importance of listening carefully and asking the right questions to complete a task unfamiliar to them.

Materials:

- a. Drawing paper (two to three sheets per student)
- b. Pens and pencils
- c. A clock or watch
- d. Two desks

Procedure:

1. Arrange students into pairs.
2. Have each pair of students sit at their desks back-to-back, with the writing surfaces of their desks in front of them.
3. Tell students that one of them will be Student "A" and the other will be student "B". Have students in each pair choose one of the letters.
4. After students have chosen their letters, ask each student to write his or her letter in the top corner of a blank sheet of paper.
5. Next, instruct all "A's" to spend two minutes drawing something on their papers. Students need not be good at drawing – even stick drawings will suffice for this activity. It is important that partners do not look at or talk to each other during this part of the activity.
6. While "A's" are drawing, "B's" should remain in their seats.
7. At the end of the two-minute drawing period, instruct "A's" to put down their pens/pencils.
8. Next, tell "B's" to pick up their pens/pencils.

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9. Instruct "A's" to give a clear description of their drawings to their respective partners. Instruct "B's" to listen only to their partners' instructions. Each "B" will use the oral instructions to try to re-create his or hers partner's drawings. Allow five minutes for his next step. *Remember: the only means of communication is for each "A" to provide description of the drawing o his or her partner.* "B's" can only listen and draw. Partners should remain sitting back-to-back at all times during this part of the activity.
10. At the end of the five-minute time period, instruct "B's" to put down their pens/pencils.
11. Allow a few minutes for partners to show each other their drawings and discuss the results.
12. For the next part of the activity, instruct partners to resume their back-to-back positions.
13. Provide each student with a clean sheet of drawing paper and tell students that the second part of the activity will be different from the first part. Have "B's" spend three minutes drawing on their papers. Students should use the entire three minutes to draw something beyond a simple shape or two.
14. When three minutes are up, "B's" should put down their pens/pencils.
15. Remind all pairs to remain seated back-to-back. Instruct all "A's" are going to reproduce their partners' drawings, but the only way they can obtain information about those drawings is by asking yes or no questions. *Emphasize that only questions that can be answered yes or no are allowed!*
Allow students five minutes to complete this part of the activity.
When time is up, have partners compare their drawings.

Assessment:

Take time to discuss the difficulties or successes experienced by the pairs. Ask which exercise was more difficult and why. Discuss what they learned about the need for effective communication.

Students should conclude in their discussions that the effective communication requires cooperation, honest listening, clear instructions, and respect for one another, clarifying questions, proper feedback, and openness to divergent opinions.