



## Communication Activities

The resources are meant to be downloaded and edited as necessary to meet the specific needs and/or experience level of your Participant group and/or be incorporated into other existing materials in use by your organization.

### Activity 1. Listening with Intent

Share the following quote with learners.

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

— **Stephen R. Covey**

Divide the learners into pairs. Ask them to identify which person will speak first. Tell the speaker that they have two minutes. Announce the topic for the first speaker. They must talk for the entire two minutes. The listener's role is to listen attentively. The listener CANNOT speak or make any sound. Facial expressions are allowed. Highlight the fact that the listener will receive a different topic, so they will not be trying to think of what they will say while the other person is speaking. After two minutes, switch the roles, giving the new speaker a different topic.

Possible topics:

- My hometown
- My dream vacation
- My family history
- My best school year

After both partners have spoken, ask the following questions.

- What were some difficulties with this exercise?
- What was easy?
- What strategies did you use to focus on the speaker?

Hand out the Top Ten Obstacles to Listening (attached). Combine two sets of partners. Have them spend some time discussing the various obstacles.

Ask each learner to come up with an acronym that will help them to **personally** be a better listener. An acronym is an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word.

Here is an example. **FLIP**

**F** – Focus on the words

**L** – Look at the speaker

**I** – Intention, why is the person speaking?

**P** – Push away wandering thoughts and own agenda

Optional: Have learners create a poster for their acronyms.

## Reflection Questions

1. Which of the Top Ten Obstacles did you identify as the top one for you? Why?
2. How can we become better listeners?
3. How can we become better speakers?
4. What reasoning did you use to select the letters and meanings for your acronym?
5. What strategies can we use to make the speaking and listening interaction be more positive?

## Activity 2. Who's Buying?

In this activity, learners will create two separate persuasive presentations in a digital format. The presentations will be designed to target two different demographics. The presentations could be in the form of a video commercial, PowerPoint, or animation. If technology is unavailable, learners can present speeches or skits that include visual aids. Here are some ideas for the activity. Of course, they can be customized to make them more relevant to the group. This activity may be done in groups or as individuals.

Prompts:

- Your company will release the latest video game system in three months. It will be the most expensive ever released. You are asked to create a pitch to get teens to buy it. For the second presentation you need to persuade parents that it is a good investment.
- You work in an ice cream shop because ice cream is your passion. Experimenting at home, you have come up with a new flavor that you think the company should start making. Your first presentation will be used to convince corporate headquarters that it could be a best-selling flavor. The second presentation needs to sell the flavor to the public.
- Your superintendent wants to have the school switch to standards-based report cards. The district's principals all agree. Your job is to persuade your fellow teachers that this is a good idea. The second presentation should be directed at parents to get them on board and explain how it will benefit their children's education.
- You have been researching a new virus protection system as part of your job in IT. You need to create a presentation to convince your office manager to purchase the new system. The second presentation will be used at the Senior Center to help older adults understand the importance of virus protection and why this one would be the best choice.
- A new piece of safety equipment is now required in your workplace. Your first presentation is to show all employees how it is used and how it improves their safety. The second presentation is for corporate headquarters to prove that the company is in compliance with the new requirement.

## Reflection Questions

1. How do the two presentations differ?
2. How did you alter your thinking when creating the second presentation?
3. What type of research did you do to determine your content?
4. How did word choice vary in the two presentations?
5. How did the graphics and visuals align to your audience?

### Activity 3. Program the Robot

Materials: Sticky notes, pens, writing paper, and simple object.

Preparation: Set up a simple obstacle course in the room by shifting desks, tables, or chairs, placing objects in a walkway, or taping a circuitous route on the floor using painters' tape. Place an object at the end of the course to serve as a prize.

1. Divide the learners into groups. Explain that one person in the group will be the robot. The group needs to write instructions for the robot to navigate the obstacle course. Have learners write a single step on each sticky note. Examples: Take two steps forward. Turn to the left. Take five steps forward, and so on.
2. Learners should stick their notes on a wall or board in the order they want the robot to follow. Using the sticky notes makes it easy to rearrange the sequence, if needed. Remind learners that the robot can only take action if it has a programmed step to do so.
3. Select one learner to act as the robot. Each group should read their instructions in the order while their robot follows the instructions to navigate the course. Have other groups observe closely. Sometimes the robots try to anticipate the next move and don't actually receive the correct instruction.
4. If their robot is unsuccessful, ask the group to rethink the programming that they have written, before the robot tries again.
5. Additional "Robot" tasks might be making a peanut butter/jelly sandwich, folding and flying a paper airplane, sending an email, planting a flower in a pot, or baking and serving a frozen pizza.

#### Reflection Questions

1. How was your group successful during this activity?
2. What were some difficulties your group faced during this activity?
3. What kind of problem solving did you need?
4. How does this activity relate to real world situations?

### Activity 4. PowerPoint Salvage Operation

Have learners read and discuss the Effective PowerPoint Presentations document (attached). Learners are then to find at least five really poor examples of PowerPoint presentations online. Have learners document and make notes about how the presentations could be improved. Task them with improving one of these poor examples in at least three different ways. Have a Before and After demonstration showing the two versions of the same presentation.

#### Reflection Questions

1. What criteria did you use to determine a poor example?
2. How did you determine the changes you wanted to make?
3. Which of the "number rules" did you use and why?
4. How do effective PowerPoints improve others' understanding of a concept?
5. How do poor PowerPoints hinder full participation by all team members in a task or project?

## Activity 5. Consumer Reports

*Consumer Reports* magazine tests and reviews thousands of items. The magazine publishes information about the items and lists which ones are the best, which are the best for the money, and runners-up in the various categories. In this activity, learners will research digital tools and create a report in the style of the magazine.

Show learners an example of the *Consumer Reports* magazine. These are available at most libraries and online with a subscription.

Give learners the following prompt. Adapt the prompt to fit technology used by your industry.

*The company wants to find a digital tool that will assist managers in creating educational videos to inform employees about site safety, employee benefits, and procedures relevant to the business. You are asked to research the available tools. You will need to create a Consumer Reports-style presentation to explain the information you have researched.*

### Reflection Questions

1. How did you choose the digital tool you used?
2. What pros and cons are associated with this tool?
3. How did you determine the information you wanted to present?
4. Would your method of communication affect the decision making of the purchaser?

## Activity 6. Email Efficiency and Etiquette

First have learners brainstorm a list of guidelines that they feel are important for professional emails. Give learners the Email Etiquette and Efficiency sheet (attached). Discuss how the various guidelines help create clear, productive communication between colleagues. Give each learner the Email Etiquette worksheet (attached). Once learners have written the answers, divide into small groups and encourage discussion about the responses.

### Reflection Questions

1. Why is there etiquette for emails?
2. How do emails that are poorly constructed cause issues?
3. What email habits might you need to break to improve communication?
4. When do you think face-to-face communication or a phone call would be better than an email?

## Crosswalk of Performance Indicators and Activities for Communication

Performance Indicator	Activity 1 Listening with Intent	Activity 2 Who's Buying	Activity 3 Program the Robot	Activity 4 Power Point Salvage	Activity 5 Consumer Reports	Activity 6 Email Etiquette
Builds understanding through active listening, asking questions, focusing on context, and acknowledging others' points of view	X					
Writes in a manner so that others understand			X		X	X
Speaks in a manner so that others understand			X		X	
Selects and uses proper digital tools		X		X		
Adjusts word choice, tone, and time based on audience, purpose of communication, and situational context	X	X	X	X	X	X

## Other Competencies Addressed in Communication Activities

Competency	Activity 1 Listening with Intent	Activity 2 Who's Buying	Activity 3 Program the Robot	Activity 4 Power Point Salvage	Activity 5 Consumer Reports	Activity 6 Email Etiquette
<b>Working with Others</b>						
Teamwork and Conflict Resolution			X			X
Cultural Competence	X					X
Adaptability and Flexibility		X	X			
<b>The Thought Process</b>						
Problem Solving		X		X	X	
Decision Making					X	
Critical Thinking				X		
<b>Self - Regulation</b>						
Initiative and Self-Drive						
Reliability and Accountability					X	
Planning and Organizing						

Refer to Index for a full list of Performance Indicators in each activity