

Teaching Tools:

Communications Activity Masters

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Introductions—More Than Just a First Impression

Introductions, whether presenting yourself or introducing others, set the tone and help determine the future of the relationship between those being introduced. In a business setting, the purpose of introductions is to lay the foundation for a working relationship between two or more people. An effective introduction is important because it creates a strong and lasting impression, which allows the listener to recall your name and connect you with a positive professional image. Suggestions for an effective business introduction are:

- Offer a greeting, followed by the clear statement of your first and last name. (“Hello, my name is Lucia Delgado.”)
- If appropriate, explain how you prefer to be addressed. (“Please call me Lucia.”)
- Give your title and purpose for meeting. (“I’m the director of sales with Fashions Unlimited. I’d like to talk with you about carrying our line.”)
- Present a firm handshake and make eye contact. Keep in mind that this step may be adapted for various cultures.
- Offer your business card.

You may find yourself in the position of introducing individuals to one another. Business meetings may be one such setting. Good methods for conducting introductions in a business meeting include the following:

- Ask all participants to introduce themselves, using names and titles. Begin with yourself.
- Introduce yourself as well as everyone else at the meeting.
- Ask one or more co-workers to introduce meeting participants.

Special attention to etiquette is necessary when making introductions with international or cross-cultural individuals. Following are some techniques for effective international/cross-cultural introductions:

- Avoid using slang or jargon your listener may be offended by or not understand.
- Enunciate words carefully and speak a bit more slowly when addressing individuals whose first language is not English.
- Try to eliminate cultural stereotypes you may believe in; focus on the individual.
- Avoid gestures; some could be offensive to the listener.
- If you have the opportunity, study the individual's cultural background to be aware of appropriate conventions for introductions.

It is important to be culturally sensitive when making introductions as different groups of people have different rules of etiquette. As a result, individuals may be offended, scared, or even repulsed by actions that may be appropriate for your cultural group but inappropriate for others. If you are not prepared, you could lose their business.

Communications Activity Master 1

Name _____

Date _____

Introductions—More Than Just a First Impression

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about making business introductions. Reread the feature on business introductions if you need assistance.

1. What is the purpose of a business introduction?

2. What are some suggestions for an effective business introduction?

3. Why is an effective introduction important?

4. What are some good methods for conducting introductions in a business meeting?

5. What are some techniques for making effective introductions to international or cross-cultural individuals?

6. Why is it important to be sensitive to cultural differences when making introductions?

7. **Business Scenario.** You are the assistant vice president of sales in a large computer software firm. A potential new client is scheduled to visit your office next week. Decide what country or cultural group this potential client is from, confirm your choice with your teacher, and then prepare for the visit. You should conduct research on your client's background and share the information with your sales team (classmates).

Resolving Conflict—It Isn't All Bad

Conflict can be defined quite simply as *competing differences between two or more people*. These differences are often caused by struggles over goals, motives, values, ideas, and resources. Believe it or not, conflict can be both good and bad, depending upon the results of the conflict. The consequences of negative, unresolved conflict are decreased productivity, low employee morale, and heightened workplace tensions. These all have the potential to damage the success of a business. However, conflict of the right nature can be beneficial to business. For example, friendly conflict can encourage competition, diverse thinking, creativity, and a wider variety of solutions to business problems.

Prevention is the solution to many problems, including workplace conflict. Some tips for preventing negative conflict in the workplace include the following:

- Be open to others' ideas; listen before making up your mind.
- Avoid stereotyping your co-workers and superiors.
- Do not use language or expressions that may be offensive or demeaning to others.
- Disagree constructively; offer alternative suggestions or solutions rather than simply rejecting others' ideas.
- Above all, treat your co-workers and superiors with the respect you want them to show you.

Unfortunately, conflict cannot always be avoided. All types of conflict can arise, from personality clashes to conflict over business ideas. The following strategies can be helpful in managing conflict with co-workers:

- **Intervention:** Ask a co-worker or supervisor to provide a setting for conflict resolution between you and those with whom you are in conflict. A supervisor also might speak on your behalf to the co-worker with whom you are in conflict.
- **Confrontation:** Approach the co-worker with whom you are having trouble. Both of you must recognize the problem and then work together toward a solution.
- **Compromise:** If the conflict involves a disagreement over a particular business issue, you might work out a compromise solution. For example, you may agree with your co-worker's idea in exchange for similar treatment during the next conflict.
- **Avoidance:** The avoidance technique should be your last solution, but in some situations it may be best. If you simply cannot solve a personality conflict, deal with the individual when you need to but otherwise steer clear.

Conflict between yourself and a superior is acceptable and in some cases even beneficial, if it leads to increased mutual respect. However, conflict with superiors must be handled with care and should not be seen as a challenge to your superior's authority. Conflict with superiors should be kept professional and private.

Communications Activity Master 2

Name _____

Date _____

Resolving Conflict—It Isn't All Bad

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about resolving conflict. Reread the feature on resolving conflict if you need assistance.

1. What is conflict?

2. What are the consequences of negative conflict?

3. What are the benefits of conflict?

4. What are some tips for preventing negative conflict in the workplace?

5. What are some strategies for managing conflict with a co-worker?

6. **Business Scenario.** In a news or business publication such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, or *U.S. News and World Report*, locate a story about a business conflict. Make a copy of this story, then determine who is involved in the conflict, what the conflict is about, and how you suggest solving the problem. Share your story and solution with your class.

Nonverbal Communication—Actions Speak Louder Than Words!

Nonverbal forms of communication are always present and often play a deciding role in business success. Whether intentional or not, nonverbal messages influence how the receiver interprets what you are saying. You are constantly sending nonverbal messages to the world around you. These nonverbal messages contribute to creating a lasting impression on co-workers and clients. Negative nonverbal messages can destroy business opportunities and create conflict. The most common nonverbal messages are conveyed through the following:

- physical appearance
- body language
- emphasis on time
- use of space

Physical appearance, which includes dress, grooming, and hygiene, is often the first impression you make on someone and is, therefore, quite important. Physical appearance doesn't just apply to how you look; it carries through to other aspects of your business and personal communication. For instance, physical appearance can include the way you present yourself in print or online: how a letter or e-mail looks, the formatting and neatness of a report, the images you post on Facebook or MySpace. All of these factors say something about your professionalism. In the same way, the clothes you wear and the neatness of your hair send messages about you.

Body language, or messages sent through the use of your body, can alter or influence the meaning of a verbal message. For example, a person slumping in a chair may give the impression of being tired or depressed. A handshake that is too strong and causes pain may give the impression of a person who is overly aggressive or inconsiderate. Also, an individual who fails to make eye contact might be interpreted as dishonest or not listening. Checking messages, texting, or playing games on a cell phone or PDA during conversation with a customer, co-worker, or supervisor, sends the message that they are unimportant to you.

The nonverbal factors of time and space provide indicators of the seriousness, formality, and importance of the communication process. A person who is always on time, for example, gives the impression of being well-organized, dependable, and appreciative of the importance of business commitments. An example of communicating through the use of space would be the case of an individual who stands away from a supervisor and is interpreted as being afraid or unfriendly.

You should also be aware that different cultures have different nonverbal messages. For example, in the culture of corporate America, eye contact is typically expected among co-workers and superiors. Making eye contact shows respect and understanding. However, in some Asian cultures direct eye contact would be considered disrespectful and a challenge to authority. In Japan, keeping your eyes lowered is a sign of respect. In the United States, this behavior is often misinterpreted as showing a lack of interest or not listening. It is important that you learn about nonverbal etiquette for a wide variety of cultures, and put your knowledge into practice.

Communications Activity Master 3

Name _____

Date _____

Nonverbal Communication—Actions Speak Louder Than Words!

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about nonverbal communication. Reread the feature on nonverbal communication if you need assistance.

1. What role do nonverbal forms of communication play in the workplace?

2. How are the most common nonverbal messages conveyed?

3. What are some examples of body language that might convey negative impressions?

4. Give an example of how the use of space and time influence the communication process.

5. Why is physical appearance an especially important form of nonverbal communication?

6. How is direct eye contact interpreted in Japan? How do Americans often misinterpret Japanese eye-contact behavior?

7. **Business Scenario.** Observe two people talking and take notes on each individual's nonverbal behavior. You must not be able to hear what is being said. What can you interpret about the conversation and relationship based on each person's physical appearance, body language, emphasis on time, and use of space? How might these observations be different in a different culture?

Teamwork–The Key to Success

There is an old saying that goes, “Find a job you love and you'll never work another day in your life.” It means that doing something you really like doesn't seem like drudgery or work. Instead, it will involve pleasant, joyful challenges most of the time.

A very important part of enjoying a job is liking and successfully working with the other people at your workplace. Your ability to get along with co-workers who are members of your team depends on how you treat them and how well you communicate with them. Being a good team player means doing your job to the best of your ability, doing your share of the common workload, supporting your co-workers, and tolerating their faults and weaknesses.

The results of a survey by Torontojobs.ca, show how important it is to work as part of a team instead of always looking out for yourself. According to the survey, these are the top ten reasons employees were terminated:

1. Bringing their personal life to work with them.
2. Forgetting about teamwork; looking out for their own best interests.
3. Arriving late to work and leaving early.
4. Sleeping at their desk on a daily basis.
5. Taking extra long lunch breaks.
6. Downloading anything and everything from the World Wide Web.
7. Complaining about their job to anyone that was willing to listen.
8. Constantly searching for other jobs during work hours.
9. Lying on their job application or resume.
10. Drinking alcoholic beverages on the job.

Think about all the ways those behaviors negatively affect your co-workers and your employer. Getting along with co-workers on a team is a very high priority in most organizations. Below are some tips to help you get along:

- Pull your share of the load. Don't expect others to cover for you.
- Accept praise gracefully. Thank your manager for praise.
- Share the credit. Be certain to tell your employer about the efforts of others.
- Flatter people sincerely. Say nice things to people because you want to.
- Don't flaunt special privileges. Accept privileges quietly.
- Let everyone be a winner. No one has to be a loser to make another person a winner.

Sometimes teams fail to work well because one person will not tolerate another. The more tolerant you are, the better team member you will become. Tolerance of others' habits, mannerisms, styles, and attitudes will serve you well at work.

Communications Activity Master 4

Name _____

Date _____

Teamwork—The Key to Success

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about teamwork. Reread the feature on teamwork if you need assistance.

1. What does the phrase “Find a job you love and you’ll never work another day in your life” really mean?

2. What does it mean to be a good team worker?

3. According to the survey cited in the text, what are three of the top ten reasons people lose their jobs?

4. List five tips that will help you be a better team member and employee.

5. What is meant by tolerance of team members?

6. **Business Scenario.** Letitia recently joined a work team at Dolan Manufacturing made up of six people, including herself. The team members represented both genders, a broad range of ages, and several ethnic groups. The tasks they were assigned required each of them to work very closely and that each pulled his or her own weight.”

Your task is to prepare a paragraph containing advice for Letitia on how to get along with and tolerate her team members. Based on what you have read in the “Teamwork” feature in the text, what will you tell her?

Modes of Communication—Getting Through to Others

Communication is probably the most vital component of success in the business community. Simply defined, the communication process involves the exchange of information and meaning between individuals. Research shows that managers spend approximately 60% to 80% of their work time involved in communicating with others.

The process of sending and receiving messages requires strong, effective communication skills. The communication process can be complicated because of the differences in how individuals receive and process information. In your communication encounters, you must decide on the most effective and appropriate techniques for conveying your message.

As a businessperson, you can use many communication strategies and tools. The most common form of business communication is the telephone. Telephone calls play an important role in conveying personal and immediate attention to issues of concern, and they are an opportunity for timely feedback. And with the proliferation of cell phones and virtually worldwide cellular and satellite networks, it is now possible to reach almost anyone anywhere at any time.

Electronic mail (e-mail) has become a critical communication tool in the business world because it is fast, flexible, and inexpensive. Today, it is hard to imagine doing business without e-mail. Though typically considered informal, it is the recognized solution to many communication needs. Following are some examples of when e-mail might be the best mode of communication:

- when a large amount of detail is required in a request
- when requests are informal
- when work schedules are not conducive to telephone contact
- when several co-workers need to see the same information
- when co-workers want others to react to information and participate in decision making

The most formal type of business communication is the letter. Seen as formal because they require a signature and are sent on company letterhead, letters are used to communicate official or formal messages. Letters are often used to convey messages of gratitude or information, and they are typically viewed as the least time-sensitive form of communication.

Other documents, as well as letters, may be sent to others through a facsimile transmission (fax). Although faxing documents is common, you will typically find that faxes are most often used when key documents need to be transmitted, time pressures are extreme, and formality is unimportant. Faxes, though, are more commonly being replaced by e-mails with documents attached to them. High-speed connections along with scanner/copiers and more powerful computers now enable transmission of very large documents via e-mail at resolutions and at speeds not possible by fax.

Communications Activity Master 5

Name _____

Date _____

Modes of Communication—Getting Through to Others

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about modes of communication. Reread the feature on modes of communication if you need assistance.

1. What does the communication process involve?

2. How much time do business managers spend in communication activities?

3. When is it most appropriate to use e-mail as a form of communication?

4. When is it most appropriate to use business letters as a form of communication?

5. When is it most appropriate to use faxes as a form of communication?

6. **Business Scenario.** This morning your boss, Ichiro, asked you to contact a list of five prospective clients with whom the company has not had any previous contact. You are responsible for cultivating these five contacts and trying to win them as clients. How will you initiate contact with them? What various forms of communication will you use throughout the next few weeks with these individuals?

Giving Presentations—What Do You Have to Say?

Presentations are a common method for communicating information, ideas, and opinions to large groups of people. Although audience size may range from one or two colleagues to several hundred or even thousands, there are certain methods and techniques that can help you make a better presentation.

First and foremost, know your audience. Know what kinds of information they need to hear and what they need to learn from you. Know what kinds of audiovisual aids will appeal to them and hold their attention, and have an idea about their backgrounds, interests, and experiences. By having an understanding of how your audience will process information, you can more effectively choose the audiovisual aids that will hold their attention and enhance your presentation.

Examples of audiovisual aids include audiotape, CD's and DVD's, posters, charts, maps, artwork, chalkboards or whiteboards, easel pads, objects, overhead projectors, videos, and computer-based presentations such as PowerPoint; even live animals have been used. The range of audiovisual aids is almost limitless; but remember that these should be used to support and enhance your message, not overwhelm it.

Handouts are another type of visual aid you can use to give your audience more information than you could possibly deliver orally, and they can be a lasting reminder of your message. If you use handouts, plan their use carefully. You may want to delay putting them in the hands of your audience until you are ready to reference them, or even hand them out after your presentation. If handed out too early, they can distract your audience from paying attention to you.

You should also choose a format for your presentation that will best convey your message. Formats include formal speech (usually the choice for large audiences), question and answer, audience participation, open dialogue or discussion, narrations or readings, skits, and demonstrations. Some presentations may use multiple formats; for example, a formal speech followed by a question and answer period.

Overall, to guarantee a successful presentation, you should do the following:

Before

- Prepare your materials in advance, including speaker notes and background research.
- Practice your presentation, especially difficult words or concepts.
- Test, or try out, any audiovisual equipment you plan to use.
- Anticipate questions your audience may raise.

During

- Maintain eye contact with your audience.
- Use hand gestures to emphasize key points.
- Use your audiovisuals to enhance your message, not as a crutch.
- Have fun, and so will your audience.

After

- Thank your audience for their attention and/or participation.

Communications Activity Master 6

Name _____

Date _____

Giving Presentations—What Do You Have to Say?

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about giving presentations. Reread the feature on giving presentations if you need assistance.

1. What is the most important information you need before preparing a presentation?

2. List four types of audiovisuals and explain how each might support or enhance a presentation?

3. Why do you need to be careful about using handouts?

4. Name three presentation formats and cite an example of when each might be most appropriate?

5. What are four things you should always do before giving a presentation?

6. **Business Scenario.** You are a salesperson who has been asked by the sales manager to present a new kitchen appliance to a group of about 50 interested retailers. Make a list of the kinds of things you'd like to know about this audience before you prepare your presentation. What audiovisual aids do you think would enhance and support your message? What format(s) do you think would work best for you?

E-Mail Etiquette—It Says a Lot About You

Electronic mail is standard practice in business today; often preferred over regular mail and even fax machines as being quicker, yet less intrusive than a phone call. However, e-mail isn't always the best choice of communication. If your message is lengthy, requires discussion, is highly personal or private, or likely to be misunderstood, choose some other way to communicate it.

E-mail messages should be written with the same care as traditional letters, including proper grammar and spelling. Always proofread and spell check your e-mails; and always reread your e-mails for accuracy, clarity, and tone before you send them.

One common e-mail mistake is “flaming,” which is a nasty or offensive e-mail message. If you are tempted to send a “flaming” e-mail, stop and consider: “Is this something I would say to the person’s face or have someone else overhear?” If not, don't send it. Remember, once sent, e-mail is not retrievable, and it is virtually never private! If you are using an e-mail system at work, you need to know that by law your employer owns the e-mail system and can access everything it contains, including all messages you send and receive—even your personal messages.

Here are several more “dos and don'ts” to observe when sending or forwarding e-mail:

Dos

- Be concise and to the point.
- Anticipate questions your reader(s) may have and be sure you've answered them.
- While an immediate response is not usually expected, respond as quickly as you can.
- Use the “Urgent” flag only when your message is extremely time-sensitive.
- When sending e-mail, be careful who you copy—your reader(s) will make inferences about your motives.
- When replying to a message with multiple addresses be diligent about “Reply to All.” Carefully choose those who need to see your response.

Don'ts

- Don't “dress up” your e-mails with large, fancy, colorful fonts and emoticons—it can send the message that you are more concerned with style than substance, and it's usually perceived as unprofessional.
- Do not compose your message in all CAPITALS—it is the same as shouting at your reader.
- Don't e-mail your message to “everyone;” send it only to those you know will want or need to read it.
- Do not forward chain letters! Many businesses have strict policies prohibiting it, and many are hoaxes (check these out at Snopes.com).
- Do not request “delivery” and “read” receipts unless they are legally necessary—they are perceived as “pushy” and they can quickly bog down e-mail servers.
- Never reply to spam! It will only verify your e-mail address as active and generate more spam.

Virtually everyone will work with e-mail throughout their careers and personal lives. Your e-mail etiquette could make or break your career success, and it can build or harm relationships.

Communications Activity Master 7

Name _____

Date _____

E-Mail Etiquette—It Says a Lot About You

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about using e-mail. Reread the feature on e-mail if you need assistance.

1. How is e-mail like a business letter? How is it different from a phone call?

2. Why is it important to follow e-mail etiquette in the workplace?

3. What are some characteristics of effective e-mail messages?

4. Why is the e-mail etiquette rule against sending flaming messages important?

5. Why should you avoid sending or receiving private e-mail at work?

6. Give two examples where it would be best to use e-mail. Give two examples where it would be best to speak to someone face-to-face.

7. **Business Scenario.** Two weeks ago your boss, Jack, urgently requested that you obtain some sales figures. Assume that you wrote an e-mail more than one week ago to the marketing manager, requesting these sales figures. At the same time, the marketing manager indicated that she would have the sales figures to you as soon as she could get to it. Today, Jack complained because you still did not have the sales figures for him.

Write a return e-mail to the marketing manager asking for the sales figures for a second time. What will be the tone of your e-mail message? Share your e-mail message to the marketing manager with your class. Critique other students' e-mail messages.

Responding to Criticism–You Think That About Me?

Criticism is often viewed in a negative manner, generally because it can be taken personally and can cause hurt feelings. However, used properly, criticism is a valuable tool for personal and professional development.

There are two types of criticism, constructive and destructive. Constructive criticism isolates the criticism to one or two specific behaviors and situations, explains the impact of those behaviors in those situations, and offers techniques for how to improve the behaviors or handle the situations differently. Destructive criticism often includes personal attacks, as well as broad, generalized statements about behavior. It is also destructive to criticize someone in front of their co-workers. Destructive criticism can prove to be distressing, even disabling.

Criticism is a form of feedback, and feedback can be a matter of fact or judgment. Matters of fact deal with actual records or observed behaviors which determine what has been said and done. Matters of judgment deal with opinions about what has been said and done. Typically, matters of judgment are likely to be the most destructive form of feedback because they are based on opinions, second-hand (sometimes incorrect) information, and personal biases.

To deal effectively with criticism, you should be prepared to view unwelcome comments as an opportunity to grow and improve your patience as well as your performance. Dealing effectively with criticism can also include developing action plans or professional development plans aimed at improving behaviors, habits, and work performance.

When responding to criticism, you should avoid the following:

- responding defensively or in anger
- shifting the blame to others
- falsely asking for sympathy
- denying that problems or opportunities for growth exist
- turning against others

If you have been unfairly criticized, you should allow a "cooling-off" period for both yourself and the one who offered the criticism. Presuming you have a good relationship with your accuser, request an opportunity to speak with them privately. Then, avoiding the behaviors listed above, calmly explain the facts as you know them and explain why you acted as you did. However the discussion goes, be sure to thank the person for listening.

If you have been unfairly criticized and you do not have a good relationship with your accuser, you could speak to a neutral third party (or the Human Relations Department) who could intervene on your behalf. This approach carries some risk of retaliation by your accuser and is best reserved for situations where your job security, pay, or advancement are put at risk.

Sometimes, the best way of handling unfair criticism is to accept it as a learning experience and continue to do your very best. If the criticism was truly unfair, your performance over time will make it fade away. The most important rule to follow in receiving criticism is to maintain a positive attitude and behave professionally.

Communications Activity Master 8

Name _____

Date _____

Responding to Criticism—You Think That About Me?

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about responding to criticism. Reread the feature on responding to criticism if you need assistance.

1. What are the two types of criticism, and how would you define them?

2. What should you avoid in responding to criticism?

3. How can you effectively deal with criticism?

4. Describe destructive criticism.

5. How should you handle unfair criticism?

6. **Business Scenario.** Martha, vice president of a computer software company, was angry. She had called Miguel, a programmer, into her office and accused him of planting an unprofessional, hidden message in their software code. It had just been discovered by a customer. Miguel didn't do it, but he knew about the hidden code and he suspected who had written it. How might Martha's tone differ if she likes Miguel? How should Miguel respond to Martha? How do the elements of fact and judgment enter into their discussion?

Your Resume—Your Portrait in Print

A resume is essentially a tool that provides information about you to a potential employer. Two of the most popular types of resumes are experience-based and qualifications-based. In an experience-based resume, professional experiences are listed in order of importance or work history. In a qualifications based resume, your abilities or qualifications appropriate for the type of job you are applying for are highlighted.

Keys to successful resume writing include the use of action words, which demonstrate what you have accomplished or achieved. For example, words such as “organized,” “accomplished,” “computed,” “created,” “managed,” and “researched” are good action-word choices. Other keys include proofreading and following a strict adherence to honesty about your qualifications. Remember that employers check resume information. Providing false information can cause you to lose a winning job! False information, found after you have been hired, can lead to your dismissal and long-term career difficulties.

A typical resume includes the following sections in this order:

- Career Objective
- Career Preparation (also called Education)
- Career Progression (also called Experience)
- Career-Related Honors and Activities
- Community Service or Involvement
- Personal Information (some experts advise against this; if used, make it job-related)

Often you will find that it is helpful to include a list of your skills or talents that relate to the job you are applying for. In a Career Objective section, you can tailor your statement to precisely fit the job you'd like to have. This section demonstrates to an employer your motivation and sense of direction and purpose, as well as your fit with the employer's position. It is always a good idea to customize your resume for each employer as you apply for jobs.

Finally, be careful what personal information you include. According to the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), it is illegal for employers to make hiring decisions based on personal information such as age, marital status, race, gender, and so on. Therefore, potential employers prefer not to see this type of information. List only personal information, such as hobbies, memberships, or personal interests, that is relevant to the job you seek.

Communications Activity Master 9

Name _____

Date _____

Your Resume—Your Portrait in Print

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about resumes. Reread the feature on resumes if you need assistance.

1. What is a resume?

2. What are two of the most popular types of resumes?

3. What can the Career Objective section demonstrate to a potential employer?

4. What are the consequences of providing false information on a resume?

5. What types of personal information might you include or leave out?

6. What are the keys to successful resume writing?

7. **Business Scenario.** Look in your local Sunday newspaper or look online at CareerBuilder.com or Monster.com, and cut out (or print out) five advertisements for jobs you'd like to have. From these advertisements, write a list of skills needed for each job. Write a career objective for a successful resume for each job.

Customer Service—"May I Help You?"

Customers are the most important part of any business. In other organizations they are sometimes called clients, patients, taxpayers, guests, passengers, and the like. But they are all really customers. A customer is any person who buys a product or service.

Customers are important because they determine the fate (or profitability) of a business. They have this power because they have choices. Customers can choose which businesses they will buy from; and they don't always choose the business that's most convenient, or has the lowest prices; often, customers will go out of their way and pay higher prices if they know they will be respected and treated well.

Today all successful organizations emphasize good relationships with customers. They conduct market research to determine their customers' wants and needs. They provide products and services, and they set pricing and sales policies designed specifically to appeal to their customers. They craft advertising messages to persuade those customers that they offer the best value. Finally, they establish customer service policies and provide customer service training to their employees. All of this is done to ensure that their customers are satisfied before, during, and after each sale.

Establishing and maintaining good customer service requires good communication. Businesses with good customer service train their employees to listen "actively" and carefully to customers as they describe what it is that they want or need, or when they are trying to solve a customer's problem.

The phrase "May I help you?" for example, is meant to encourage a customer to describe what it is they want or need to a salesperson. A salesperson who is listening actively will pay careful attention as the customer speaks and engage them in a dialogue; asking clarifying questions as needed, offering additional information, and proposing solutions to their needs. As the customer answers the questions or responds to the information offered and the solutions proposed, the salesperson is able to point the customer to the product or service that best meets their needs and their budget.

Many businesses maintain customer service departments intended to help customers with things like special orders, special services (such as gift wrapping or product installation), or problems that arise after the sale. These might include product returns and exchanges, refunds, defective merchandise, and billing problems.

So, the next time you hear, "May I help you?" remember all the planning, preparation, and training that has been done to make your buying experience a pleasant one and to retain you as a repeat customer.

Communications Activity Master 10

Name _____

Date _____

Customer Service—"May I Help You?"

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about customer service. Reread the feature on customer service if you need assistance.

1. What is a customer? Give some examples of customers.

2. Why are customers important to businesses?

3. Give one example each of customers expressing a want or need verbally and in writing.

4. Describe several ways businesses try to provide good customer service. Can you think of a business that failed due to poor customer service?

5. Try to think of, and write down, three questions more creative than "May I help you?" that might get customers to describe specific wants or needs.

6. **Business Scenario.** Some customers are annoyed by the phrase "May I help you?" They see it as "high pressure selling" or an intrusion into their shopping privacy. They do not perceive it as an attempt to learn their needs; they would rather be left alone in the store to shop at their leisure. On the other hand, some customers show displeasure when they don't get attention from a salesperson.

Interview a person you consider to be a good retail salesperson to determine the best ways to decide if and how to approach each of the types of customers described in the preceding paragraph.

The Media—Use It to Your Advantage

The word “media” is a broad term used to identify various forms of communication that reach a wide public audience. Typically, media include newspapers, television, radio, and other printed materials such as magazines, newsletters, and journals. Today, Web logs, or “blogs,” are a growing and increasingly influential element within the media. The media are important because they have the potential to influence how their listeners and viewers interpret and understand events, situations, trends, problems, or people—even concepts and ideas.

Consumers and business leaders are often required to interpret or analyze media messages and their implications. For example, stockholders may predict an increase in their company’s value if a dynamic new leader is announced in *The Wall Street Journal*. Similarly, an announcement of a factory closing may hurt the public image of a company.

Businesses use a form of communication called a “press release” (or “news release”) and a variety of media to convey messages about research, public services, personnel, and events. That kind of use is usually called “publicity.” The media are also used to promote the sale of products and services. You know that type of use as “advertising.”

Here are guidelines for preparing appealing and successful press releases:

- Be brief and clear.
- Include who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- Give details in order of importance, starting with the most important.
- Provide your preferred release date.
- Include the name of a contact person.

The generally accepted press release format includes the following points of style:

- The release should be double spaced.
- It should be printed on company letterhead.
- Special instructions should be typed in all capital letters across the top of the release.
- The release should end with a “-30-” or “###” to indicate completion of the information.

Effective use of the media can be a powerful communication tool, particularly in creating and refining an organization's public image.

Communications Activity Master 11

Name _____

Date _____

The Media—Use It to Your Advantage

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about the media. Reread the feature on the media if you need assistance.

1. Name four types of media.

- ## 2. How does business and industry use the media?

3. What five tips will help ensure that a news release will be successful and appealing?

4. Give an example of how consumers and business leaders might interpret or analyze media messages. Find an example of a recent news story that might affect a particular business in your community.

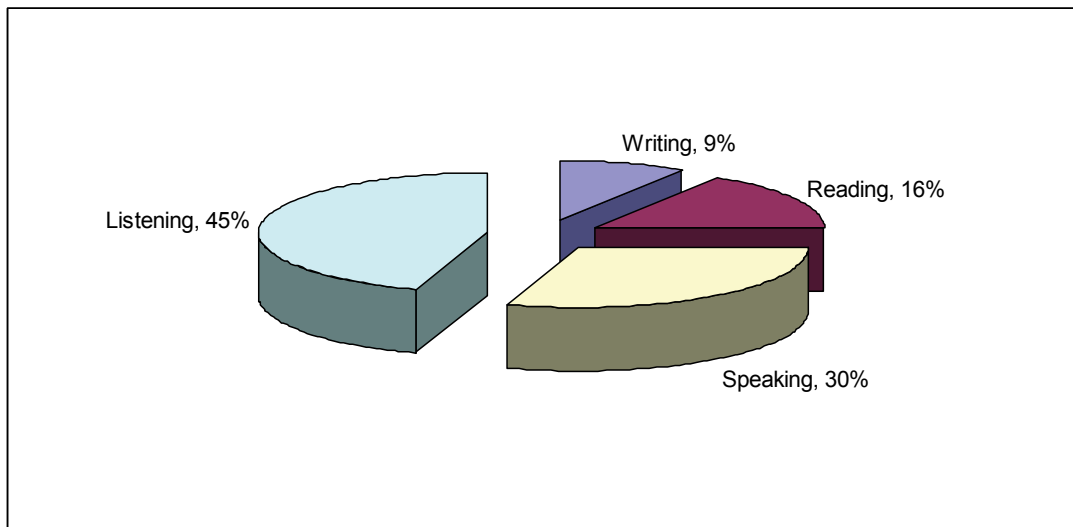
5. What points of style does the generally accepted press release format include?

6. **Business Scenario.** You work for a struggling toy company that manufactures and sells wooden toys. At a recent staff meeting, you suggested that a “Festival of Toys” be held in a local park as a means of getting the public interested in your products. Your boss, Helen, thought the idea was terrific and asked you to plan the event, including promotions. How might you use the media to promote a “Festival of Toys”? Make a list of ways to use the media; then write a press release to your local newspaper.

[illegible]

Active Listening—"What I Heard You Say Was. . ."

Listening is more important to a person at work than any other communication skill. In fact, the average employee spends almost half of communication time (45%) listening. The rest of the time is spent in speaking (30%), reading (16%), and writing (9%).



Listening isn't simply hearing what people say to you. Listening also means processing or working to understand what is being said. Processing requires you to concentrate on what people are saying in order to fully understand; and it means asking clarifying questions or paraphrasing what you've heard to be certain that you've understood.

One bad habit that many of us develop is using the time while others are speaking to think about what we want to say next. An even worse habit is allowing ourselves to be distracted by something else altogether, such as, plans for the evening's activities. That time should instead be used to listen actively for meaning in what is being said. Active listening for meaning in personal communication is not easy, but it is worth the effort.

Here is a list of suggestions to help you improve your active listening skills:

- Adopt a positive attitude toward the speaker.
- Be responsive to the speaker.
- Shut out distractions that may come between you and the speaker.
- Listen for the speaker's purpose.

An additional suggestion that works well for some people is to say to the speaker, "What I heard you say was . . . Is that correct?" Repeating this exercise helps you assure yourself and the speaker that you understand what is being said.

If you listen actively, you will understand better and remember longer what the speaker says. Listening actively will contribute to improved business communication and to your personal success.

Communications Activity Master 12

Name _____

Date _____

Active Listening—"What I Heard You Say Was. . ."

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about listening. Reread the feature on listening if you need assistance.

1. In which of the traditional four methods of communication (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) do we spend the most time? How much?

2. What does active listening mean?

3. What is one bad habit that listeners sometimes develop?

4. Try to add one suggestion to the list of suggestions for improving listening.

5. How will active listening help you as a business communicator?

6. **Business Scenario.** In the next one or two days, listen to a conversation between two people, in a business setting if possible. Complete a report according to the following format below. When you summarize the conversation, do not record it word for word. Rather, concentrate on the meaning of the conversation. Evaluate the conversation based on the suggestions for improving your active listening skills.

Date of conversation _____ Location or setting _____

Persons talking and listening _____

Summary of conversation _____

Evaluation of conversation _____

Visual Aids—Seeing Is Believing

The intent of communication is to convey messages from senders to receivers. Visual aids assist the sender in conveying messages more persuasively, and more accurately. The receiver benefits from the visual communication through enhanced clarity and recall ability. Visual aids are numerous and commonly include overhead transparencies, posters, videos, models, flip charts, electronic slide presentations, and chalkboards or dry erase boards.

To ensure effective visual presentations, keep in mind the following hints:

- Keep your design simple.
- Include only one major idea per visual.
- To maximize effectiveness, be selective in how many visuals you use.
- Position yourself to enable the audience to clearly view the visuals.
- Make an effort to paraphrase rather than read your visuals line by line.
- Proofread visuals carefully.
- Make sure visuals are large enough to be seen by the entire audience.
- Avoid distorting facts on visuals; be concise and accurate.

Visual aids are often technology-driven and projected from a computer to a whiteboard or screen. PowerPoint and Flash presentations are the current business standards. When using either of these, be sure to select templates and designs that will aid your presentation and appeal to your audience. Hint: Sometimes less is more with slide designs. That is, too much color, too many fonts, too much animation, or too many design elements can distract from your message rather than enhance it.

Charts and graphs are effective means of enhancing your presentation. The use of color can make your charts or graphs more appealing; however, be careful not to overdo it. Also, be careful to portray your information accurately; it is unethical to misrepresent data. Some types of charts and graphs you may wish to use include pie charts, organization charts, bar graphs, flow charts, line graphs, and pictographs.

You can also add photos, illustrations, and videos to your presentations. Again, be sure that you are adding clarity to your message and not distracting your audience. If you choose to edit a photo or video, remember it is unethical to change it in a way that distorts the truth.

Communications Activity Master 13

Name _____

Date _____

Visual Aids—Seeing Is Believing

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about communicating through visuals. Reread the feature on using visuals if you need assistance.

1. How do visual aids assist or benefit the sender and receiver?

2. What types of visual aids are the current business standard?

3. List three ways to ensure effective visual presentations.

4. Name one type of chart and one type of graph.

5. Why should you be careful to portray chart and graph information accurately?

6. What are several common forms of visual aids?

7. Using a photo from a magazine or newspaper, demonstrate to your class how it could be modified with a photo editor to misrepresent the truth. Explain why this is unethical.

8. **Business Scenario.** You and a colleague have been asked to develop a presentation on product advertising, which you will share with your team of co-workers. With a partner, prepare visual aids to supplement your presentation. You may use any of the types of visuals listed in the feature, but be sure to prepare at least five visual aids (they may all be of the same type). Present your visuals to the class.

Telephone Skills—Opportunity Is Calling

Even with the popularity of e-mail, telephone communication is still among the most important forms of business communication. Businesses invest a lot of time and money to persuade their customers that they are "customer-driven" or "our customers always come first." Then a customer calls and . . .

- is greeted by a quick, "Hold, please!" then put on hold before they can say a word. The customer is left on hold for several minutes to "enjoy" music they can barely tolerate. Or,
- after two minutes of listening to an automated attendant give options—"For Sales, press 1, for Accounting, press 2 . . ."—and punching their way through multiple menus, the customer is finally routed to a live voice only to hear "I'm sorry I can't help you with that, you'll have to call . . .", or "That department is closed, please call back between . . ."

You may not be able to change the way your company manages its incoming calls, but you can be sensitive to callers needs, concerns, and frustrations when they get to you. Each customer call is an opportunity to gain, lose, or retain their business. While practicing good telephone skills and etiquette, you will enhance your value to your organization by doing your best to assist its customers.

In general, you should always be pleasant, courteous, interested, sincere, and helpful. Here are some specific tips on how you can enhance your company's image whenever you answer the telephone:

- Answer the telephone promptly.
- Give the caller your name and your department and ask how you can help.
- If you don't have a personal relationship with your caller, avoid being too familiar. Callers are usually put off when called "honey," "dearie," or "darlin'." Be professional.
- Be prepared with a pencil and notepad to take a message.
- If you have music playing in your office, turn it down—your caller won't be entertained!
- Speak clearly and moderately—not too loud or soft nor too fast or slow.
- Don't eat or drink while talking. Yes, your caller will be able to tell if you do.
- Avoid interruptions. If you must interrupt, apologize and excuse yourself, then put the caller on hold. If you think you will be detained for more than a minute, ask if you can call back.
- Listen actively and attentively. People don't call just to discuss the weather—they call for a purpose.
- Find out what the caller needs and do whatever you can to help. Go out of your way, if necessary.
- If you can't help, route the caller to someone who can; and stay on the line with them until they are connected.
- If you can't help, and you can't connect them with anyone else, apologize and take a detailed message, then follow up!
- Ask if there is anything else you can help the caller with.
- Allow the caller to end the conversation.

Good telephone communication requires more than just good etiquette. You will need some additional skills. Some business telephone systems are complicated and require some training to be utilized fully. Be sure you know your system's features and how to use them, for example, to forward a call, to set up a conference call, to page someone, to record a voice mail greeting, to put a caller into someone else's voice mail, or to mute your handset should you need to have a confidential side conversation.

Finally, be easy to reach by telephone and/or leave word when you must be away. If your company has a voice mail system, leave a current greeting letting the caller know when you can return their call and who else they might reach while you are gone; and be certain to retrieve and answer your messages at least once each day.

Communications Activity Master 14

Name _____

Date _____

Telephone Skills—Opportunity Is Calling

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about telephone skills. Reread the feature on telephone skills if you need assistance.

1. Why is it so important to practice good business telephone communication techniques and etiquette?

2. Why do you think it is important to know your company's telephone system and how to use its features?

3. List four rules of good telephone etiquette and for each give an example of what could happen if it isn't practiced.

4. What should you do if you are not able to help a caller? Explain why it's important.

5. Tell why you think it is important to promptly respond to telephone messages left for you.

6. Describe a situation when you might violate the rule for avoiding interruptions and explain how you would handle it.

7. **Business Scenario.** Most successful businesses believe it is critical to their success for all employees to practice strong customer service attitudes all of the time, including their telephone communications.

Create a scoring sheet that rates a business from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) on four rules of telephone etiquette you select from this exercise. Then make a telephone call to a local business to inquire about a product or service they have for sale. Rate the businessperson you reach on the telephone. Without disclosing the name of the person or the business, describe your ranking and your experience to the members of your class.

Letters—A Communication Cornerstone

Letters are a common form of communication written for different purposes. For example, letters might be used to solve a problem, answer a question, provide information, or say “Thank you.” Typically, the two classifications of letters in the workplace are employer-to-employee letters and business letters. The benefits of using letters over other forms of communication, such as e-mail or fax, include the following:

- Letters are more formal and convey a tone of thoughtfulness and seriousness.
- Letters, depending on how they are prepared and delivered, are generally the most confidential means of communication.
- Letters carry a signature and bear the weight of authority.

Employer-to-employee letters are often used to convey personnel issues or concerns. Personnel issues might include the following:

- Compliance with workplace safety or federal guidelines
- Informing employees of job benefits or changes to benefit plans
- News about changes in the organization: mergers, acquisitions, relocation, etc.
- Invitations to company-sponsored events
- Special recognition for service or a special effort

Business letters should always be created with the goal of building or preserving good relationships, whether with customers, suppliers, service providers, creditors, regulators, investors or others. Business letters will be more successful if they do the following:

- Fully answer an inquiry or need for information
- Provide clear, concise, timely, and accurate information
- Have a friendly tone; or in the case of bad news, at least a professional tone
- Appear neat and professional
- Keep the recipient's needs and interests in mind

There are many different types of business letters, all of which focus on the operation of the company. Some reasons for business letters are inquiries, good or bad news, expressions of thanks, congratulations, sales information, and requests.

Virtually all business letters follow the same format, which includes the following:

- Writer’s address (usually in a printed letterhead along with other contact information)
- Date
- Receiver’s address
- Subject line
- Salutation (greeting)
- Body of the letter
- Complimentary closing (Sincerely, Yours truly, etc.)
- Signature block (printed name, title, and signature)
- Enclosure notation (if appropriate)

Letters are a cornerstone of all business operations, and the image, success, and future of a company can be influenced by the effectiveness of its business letters. Learning to write good business correspondence will make you more valuable to your employer, and will improve your chances for advancement.

Communications Activity Master 15

Name _____

Date _____

Letters—A Communication Cornerstone

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about letters. Reread the feature on letters if you need assistance.

1. What are some of the purposes of writing a business letter?

2. What are the two classifications of letters in the workplace?

3. What personnel issues or concerns might be dealt with in an employer-to-employee letter?

4. Name three types of business letters and explain how they might differ from one another.

5. List the components of the standard business letter format.

6. Around what basic idea should the business letter always be structured?

7. **Business Scenario.** Select a business of your choosing. Assume that one of your employees has recently completed a challenging assignment with skill and efficiency. Write a letter to this employee, congratulating and commending her on a job well done. Be sure to include all of the components of a standard letter.

Giving and Following Directions—Easier Said Than Done

Employers operate their businesses under a principle referred to as “span of control.” Span of control means that the work required to run the business is broken down into areas of responsibility (usually defined by function, but sometimes by location) and delegated to managers, or supervisors, along with the employees who report to them. As an employee, you will be part of a group or “team” with a specific set of duties and responsibilities, or span of control. To be successful, you must be aware of your own responsibilities and have the ability to give and follow directions.

Directions are messages given to employees about actions required and decisions to be made. Directions can be either written or verbal and can be expressed formally, informally, or in an implied manner. Written directions tend to be formal. For example, a written formal direction may request that the employee perform a task in a specific manner within a specific time period, perhaps within a stated budget, with specific reporting responsibilities on their progress. Verbal directions can also be formal but are generally informal. Directions that are implied often relate to a job description and rely on an employee to complete specific tasks on their own initiative.

Typically, employers rely on “standard operating procedures,” established methods of performing specific tasks or making decisions commonly applied throughout the company. Directions for these common tasks may be written in procedures manuals, but are often unwritten and implied. That doesn't mean they are less important or less rigid. Often these unwritten procedures have been established over long periods of time and are adhered to because they have consistently produced successful results.

The importance of standard operating procedures is that they provide efficiency when communicating directions. A supervisor doesn't have to communicate every single detail every time when giving directions, just enough for the employee to understand which procedures they'll need to follow, along with any special details. However, whether giving or following directions, supervisors and employees must still be very clear in how they are communicated. Misinterpreted directions can lead to the loss of sales, a damaged business reputation, even the loss of a job. It is critical, then, to avoid ambiguity when giving directions.

After issuing directions, a supervisor must rely on the employee's ability to make decisions and complete, within their span of control, the tasks they are assigned. This decision-making process typically includes six steps:

- Define the problem.
- Identify problem solutions.
- Evaluate the potential solutions.
- Choose the solution with the greatest benefit.
- Act on your choice of solution.
- Review your results.

Of course, it is important to know the limits of your authority, and when the solution you think is best exceeds your authority (e.g., over your budget), you will need to involve others above you in the decision-making process.

Directions are a common form of communication within a business, and as a supervisor or employee you should be prepared to issue directions in a friendly, constructive manner, without ambiguity. The most important rule in receiving instructions: **If you don't understand completely, ask questions!**

Communications Activity Master 16

Name _____

Date _____

Giving and Following Directions—Easier Said Than Done

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about giving and following directions. Reread the feature on giving and following directions if you need assistance.

1. What does "span of control" mean?

2. What are directions?

3. Name three steps in the decision-making process.

4. What does "standard operating procedure" mean? Why are standard operating procedures used?

5. Think about the job of a traveling sales person. What decisions do you imagine fall within his or her span of control? Describe two that likely would not.

6. Name the three ways directions can be expressed.

7. What is the most important rule in receiving directions? Why?

8. **Business Scenario.** You were recently hired as assistant manager of a stationery store. You have five subordinate employees who are all experienced. When you were hired, the manager asked you to prepare and communicate a weekly work schedule to your employees and to assign specific store responsibilities to each. Write out the directions you will need to give the employees. Tell whether each direction will be written or verbal and whether each will be formal or informal. What questions might you anticipate in order to avoid miscommunication?

Summarizing—Keep It Short and Simple

People at work in business are frequently asked to create a written summary. The summary may be of a proposal, problem, transaction, meeting, or some other event. Other times, employees are asked to provide a brief description of someone else's report. These may be requested as an abstract or a synopsis.

When you read a newspaper article or watch a TV news program, you are usually reading or watching a summary of an event. Minutes of meetings you may have attended are also summaries. Written summaries are especially important to managers who don't have time to read a complete report or listen to a lengthy presentation. In fact, summaries are sometimes called "executive summaries." The phrases "What are we dealing with here?" "Give me the short version" and "What's the bottom line?" all call for an oral summary.

Written or oral, a summary should cover the important main points—those most relevant to the decision-making process. A good principle to follow when preparing a summary is sometimes stated with the acronym KISS for "Keep It Short and Simple."

A good summary should be no more than one page, have little or no detail, omit illustrations or examples, and include at least the first two of the following elements:

- A statement of the central issue or problem.
- Principal results, or findings. These points will usually be most important for decision-making.
- Major conclusions (not all reports will state conclusions).
- Recommendations for action (optional).
- Suggestions for further study (optional).

Communications Activity Master 17

Name _____

Date _____

Summarizing—Keep It Short and Simple

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about summarizing. Reread the feature on summarizing if you need assistance.

1. How are summaries useful in a business setting?

2. What are the main characteristics of a summary?

3. What types of materials and events can be summarized?

4. Describe an example of an oral summary you have heard recently.

5. What other words might you hear in a request for a summarized account, oral or written?

6. Why do you think a summary should normally be limited to one page?

7. **Business Scenario.** Your employer relies heavily on knowledge of current business events for decision-making. Among other things, she reads the business section of the newspaper each day. She is going on a business trip that will prevent her from reading the paper for one day this week.

Your assignment is to read the business section of a local newspaper and create for your employer a summary of the leading business stories (those with major headlines) for one day. Try to follow the guidelines for writing a good summary.

Negotiation—Finding a Win/Win Solution

Disagreement and conflict are natural within any organization, particularly in business settings where different ways of thinking can result in creative, profitable business solutions. Two or more individuals in the organization (or between organizations) might disagree on many issues; however, they come into conflict when both have an interest in a mutual endeavor but can't both have it go their way. A major concern for managers and employees at all levels of a business is how to negotiate different attitudes, mind-sets, opinions, and values to reach agreement when conflicts arise.

Negotiation is a process and a tool used by professionals to build bridges between conflicting attitudes and ways of thinking. It allows for airing, and reaching a mutual understanding, of the differences and commonalities between conflicting positions in order to reach mutual agreement. For example, the VP of marketing and the VP of manufacturing may have widely differing ideas about the specifications of a new product. If they are unable to reach a compromise on their own, a mediator might be appointed to help them sort out their differences and work toward a solution both can accept.

The first step in the negotiation process is identifying the conflicting viewpoints. Second, the negotiator must establish a comfortable and trusting environment, free from judgment, before those in conflict will feel free to share their opinions. Successful negotiation allows all parties involved to state their case and build an argument in favor of it. The negotiator must allow each case to develop and then bridge differences by identifying commonalities between the two sides. A typical negotiation process includes answering these questions:

- What is your belief or attitude about the issue?
- What are the major elements of your argument?
- As you understand it, what is the conflicting belief or attitude?
- What are the major points of disagreement in the conflict?
- What commonalities exist between the two viewpoints?
- Is there a compromise you would agree to?

The objective of negotiating conflicting positions is to find a "win/win" solution; that is, all parties gain something from the final agreement—no party "loses." Of course, each will have to give up something they would like to have in the final solution, but more importantly, they can all go away feeling good about what they gained.

Many personal conflicts can be resolved by negotiation as well; issues such as use of the family car, balancing chores at home with outside activities, deciding among your friends how you will spend time after school. In personal circumstances, asking "What is your belief or attitude?" and identifying points of conflict and agreement are also key to recognizing the quality elements from each viewpoint and finding a win/win solution.

Throughout your personal life and career, negotiation skills will be vital to your personal and professional well-being. Take time early in your life to practice the interpersonal skills you will rely on later to be a successful negotiator.

Communications Activity Master 18

Name _____

Date _____

Negotiation—Finding a Win/Win Solution

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about negotiating. Reread the feature on negotiation if you need assistance.

1. What is negotiation?

2. Name three questions you might ask in a typical negotiation process.

3. What type of personal issues might be solved by using the negotiation process?

4. How does a negotiator bridge the differences in two opposing viewpoints?

5. What is the essence of a win/win outcome from negotiation?

6. **Business Scenario.** Stories of conflict appear daily in the news—political disagreements, problems among neighbors, conflicts between competing sports teams, arguments between drivers on the highways, spats between celebrities, battles between competing businesses—it goes on and on. For this activity, your teacher will form groups of three to role-play a negotiation. In your group, select a story from the news where parties are in conflict and choose two team members to play the respective parties in the conflict and one member to mediate between them. It isn't important that you research the incident selected; use only the information given in the news account. Don't use real names, just the situations. It's okay if more than one team uses the same story.

Each teammate representing a side to the conflict should write down responses to the six questions outlined in the reading. Then they should sit down with the mediator and argue their positions. Your teacher may choose to have you conduct your negotiation in front of the class or have you do it privately and present your outcome, along with your feelings about the experience, to the class.

Proofreading–Readability Insurance

Whether writing an important customer service research report for a client, completing a letter or memo, or simply sending an e-mail message, proofreading is a skill you should practice with most writing activities. Proofreading is important in all forms of business communication because it helps eliminate errors, which could reflect poorly on your writing skills, intelligence, and attitude. Everything you write says something about you, so make certain you always send out your best work! Proofreading is also important because it helps guarantee readability; that is, the reader is more likely to understand quickly and easily what you have written. Readers expect readability, especially in business communication.

Good proofreading covers the following steps:

- Read through the document, checking for typos, spelling, and grammatical errors.
- Double-check dates and figures for accuracy.
- Read the document a second time to make sure it is clear and readable.
- If possible, ask another person to read what you've written; a second reader will often discover mistakes you missed. This step is essential for very important documents.
- It may be helpful to read the document aloud, checking for readability.

Remember, when you write, you have an objective—a message you are trying to communicate. If your readers are not able to understand quickly what you have written, you haven't accomplished that objective, and you will have wasted your own time and your readers' time as well. Proofreading takes a bit of extra effort, but it ensures that what you write will be understood; and that will reflect positively on you.

Communications Activity Master 19

Name _____

Date _____

Proofreading—Readability Insurance

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about proofreading. Reread the feature on proofreading if you need assistance.

1. Why is proofreading important in business communication?

2. What should you look for when proofreading?

- ### 3. What do readers want from a piece of writing?

4. Describe the proofreading process.

5. Why is it helpful to have two proofreaders for very important documents?

6. **Business Scenario.** Ann works for a large customer service research firm. Her supervisor, Kirstin, feels that business communication within and outside of the office could use some improvement. Kirstin has assigned business communication topics to various individuals, asking them to research and prepare a teaching presentation on their topic. Ann has been asked to give a presentation on proofreading. Design Ann's presentation. Be sure to stress why proofreading is important, and prepare a plan to teach good proofreading skills.

[illegible]

Meetings–Set the Agenda!

Meetings are one of the most common and frequent business activities you will be involved in during your career. Meetings are held for many reasons including: to convey information, to do planning, to report and evaluate progress, to gather or provide feedback, to prepare documents, to express gratitude, and to provide a means of introduction. Meetings generally involve the personal encounter of two or more individuals, although technology now provides opportunities for “virtual meetings,” where individuals can be physically separated from one another by hundreds of miles. Virtual meetings are the gathering of two or more individuals through telephone and/or computer connections.

A meeting is guided by a written agenda—that is, an outline of the information to be discussed or covered during the meeting. In a sense, an agenda is a plan for the meeting. Agenda items may include the following:

- Call to order and roll check (generally for formal or large group meetings only)
- Review of the minutes from the previous meeting (if this is not a first meeting)
- Discussion on "old" (previously discussed) business
- Discussion on new business
- Discussion and assignments on action items
- Announcements
- Adjournment

This outline for a meeting is common but it is not a strict rule. The number of individuals involved, their respective positions inside or outside the organization, and the subject matter being covered often determine the degree of formality and the format of a meeting.

Meetings with clients generally do not follow a specific format. When meeting with clients, the purpose of the meeting should determine its degree of formality as well as its format. Such meetings may be held to make sales presentations; to issue proposals; to gather information; to present findings, progress assessments, or recommendations; to express gratitude, or for many other purposes. A sales presentation, for example, might be very unstructured and informal if made to one or two clients who are acquainted with the presenter. On the other hand, it might be a formal, carefully orchestrated presentation if given to a purchasing committee that will be weighing competing proposals.

One business skill that is very important is the facilitation of meetings. As a professional, you will develop your own personal style and skills for relating to individuals involved in meetings, and for keeping your meetings moving toward a conclusion or primary objective. You will need to develop skills such as listening, giving presentations, offering feedback, negotiating, and promoting teamwork, to help you facilitate meetings. Finally, you will want to practice using the technologies employed in virtual meetings so that you can use them seamlessly and unobtrusively when needed.

Communications Activity Master 20

Name _____

Date _____

Meetings—Set the Agenda!

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about meetings. Reread the feature on meetings if you need assistance.

1. What are some of the reasons meetings are held?

2. What are virtual meetings?

3. What is an agenda?

4. What items are often included in an agenda?

5. How are meetings with clients likely to differ from other meetings?

6. What skills should you work on to help you facilitate meetings?

7. **Business Scenario.** What kinds of activities or concerns are important to you? Are you involved in a student organization, team, or club? Is there an issue with one of those organizations (or at home) that concerns you? Develop and write out an agenda for a meeting you would like to call with members of the group you choose. Perhaps this will be a group of friends, classmates, student organization members, or even family members.

Memos—Big on Information, Small on Space

Although electronic mail (as a means of brief, fast mass-communication) has greatly reduced the role of the memorandum (or memo) as a form of internal business communication, memos are still commonly used for sending messages. Memos are especially useful for interoffice communication because they are easy and inexpensive to send, and because they stand out amid the deluge of e-mail most people receive daily. The memo serves a variety of purposes, from conveying information to requests for action. As a result, memos are most effective when information is presented clearly and directly.

Several points to consider when writing memos are:

- Use action words like “Please mail ...,” “Call by ...,” and “Please write ...”
- Specify a particular request and note any due dates that may apply.
- Be brief and direct; don't waste the readers' time!
- Although memos are considered a casual form of communication, proofreading is still important for a message to be clearly understood and treated seriously.

Memos are important for their usefulness in constructing a record of office activities. Therefore, they should always contain the date, sender's name, receivers' names, and the subject. There are a variety of memo formats, but the date, names, and subject should always be noted. A common memo format is shown below:

Memo	
To:	
From:	
Date:	
Subject:	
Body of Memo	

Communications Activity Master 21

Name _____

Date _____

Memos—Big on Information, Small on Space

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about memos. Reread the feature on memos if you need assistance.

1. What are some action words and phrases appropriate for memos?

2. How would you define an effective memo?

3. What is an important function of memos?

4. When might it be useful or appropriate to send a memo?

5. Why is it important to proofread memos before sending them?

6. **Business Scenario.** As head of circulation at a newspaper office, you are responsible for hiring three new delivery route managers. You assembled a search-and-selection committee from your office, and the committee met to develop a list of desirable manager attributes. Write a memo to your supervisor, explaining the results of the meeting. Offer suggestions in the memo for what you might include in an advertisement for the route manager position.

The Job Interview—Your Gateway to Success

Trends indicate that you are very likely to hold several jobs during your lifetime. For each of them, you will probably need to interview at least once, and often more than once. The job interview, then, is quite literally your gateway to employment and success. While having the necessary skills and aptitudes is the primary requirement for obtaining any job, a high percentage of qualified job applicants get turned down because they don't interview well.

Much has been written on the subject of interviewing for a job and this activity will only touch on the high points. Before you interview for the first time, you will find it helpful if you do some research on interviewing for a job (your school library and the Internet hold a wealth of resources on the subject). Look for a list of the most frequently asked interview questions, then practice answering them with someone you trust. Practice will enable you to refine your answers, help you avoid missteps, and give you confidence when you engage your interviewer.

To get you started, here are some of the most important dos and don'ts for when you finally step up to be interviewed:

Do . . .

- research the company you are going to interview with. What you learn will enable you to anticipate questions you may be asked, and it will demonstrate your genuine interest to the interviewer.
- dress appropriately for the job you are seeking. Dress stylishly but conservatively—no loud colors, no faddish outfits, simple jewelry (no bling!), good shoes (no thongs, sandals, or athletic shoes).
- arrive 10 to 15 minutes early. You should never inconvenience your interviewer; and arriving early will allow you to collect your thoughts and calm your nerves.
- clearly introduce yourself to the person who greets you and confidently explain that you are there for an interview with (name of your interviewer).
- greet your interviewer with a firm handshake, eye contact, and a smile.
- listen carefully to the questions you are asked and answer them thoughtfully and fully, but concisely.
- ask questions! Your questions should show your interest in the company and the job and reflect the knowledge you gained during your research.
- at the conclusion of the interview, confidently restate your interest in the job and state how you believe you can help the company achieve its goals; then thank the interviewer for his/her time.
- follow up promptly with a sincere thank you letter, reiterating the statements you made at the conclusion of the interview.

Don't . . .

- smoke, chew gum, put your feet up off the floor, or set anything on the interviewer's desk (without asking permission, if necessary).
- interrupt the interviewer! It is not only impolite, but you might miss an important point.
- lie or stretch the truth! If you do get the job, the lie will be grounds for dismissal if the truth is discovered later.
- ever answer a cell phone (or even look to see who's calling) during the interview! Your cell phone should be turned off before you greet the interviewer.

Developing the best interviewing skills won't guarantee that you will get the job you want most, but it will guarantee that you won't be passed over because you interviewed poorly. Your objective during the job interview is to be certain that it is your enthusiasm and qualifications for the job that remain with the interviewer after you've gone, not a poor impression of you.

Communications Activity Master 22

Name _____

Date _____

The Job Interview—Your Gateway to Success

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about interviewing for a job. Reread the feature on interviewing for a job if you need assistance.

1. Why is it important to develop good job interview skills?

2. What are the advantages of practicing your interview skills?

3. What are some of the most important things you should do during a job interview?

4. Name four things you should never do during a job interview.

5. What should be your primary objective in a job interview?

6. **Business Scenario.** In your local newspaper or online, research jobs you think you would like to have and select one of them. Through personal contacts, news stories, or on the Internet, learn as much as you can about the company posting the job, making notes as you go. Write down three questions you might ask during a job interview that relate what you have learned to the job you are interested in.

Cell Phone Etiquette—It's Not Just About You

Cell phones are now, virtually, a bodily appendage. Like our arms, legs, hands, and feet, we treat cell phones as an extension of ourselves. That familiarity often allows us to forget, or ignore, the impression we make on others by the way we use our cell phones.

All of us have, at one time or another, been annoyed by someone else's use of a cell phone. And most of us know instinctively the rules for polite cell phone use—they are the simple, common-sense rules of social behavior. Yet, when our phone rings, or when we feel the need to reach out to someone not nearby, we'll often grab our phone and start talking—oblivious to those around us, as if we had just stepped into a private room.

Although most people recognize when cell phone use is rude or inconsiderate, it doesn't hurt to state the rules specifically and to review them periodically. To that end, here are some of the more important rules for cell phone use:

- Your phone probably has a mute feature and a vibrate option. Use them appropriately whenever a ringing phone would cause a distraction, an interruption, or a disruption.
- Don't subject others to the intimate (nor banal) details of your conversations. If possible, put some distance between yourself and others around you, and keep your voice low.
- Unless you are all alone in a private setting, keep your conversations brief. If it's going to be long and it can't be avoided, excuse yourself and go somewhere private.
- Be aware of what your ringtone choices say about you and practice some restraint.
- If your phone is also a camera, ask permission before taking pictures of others.
- Don't try to talk or text while engaged in something else that requires your undivided attention.

These rules are stated briefly; there are all sorts of corollaries, qualifiers, and extensions that apply depending on location and circumstances. But even more succinctly, be courteous and considerate of others in your presence. It really is that simple.

Remember, as with your other behaviors, the way you use your cell phone in public says a lot about you both personally and professionally.

Communications Activity Master 23

Name _____

Date _____

Cell Phone Etiquette—It's Not Just About You

Complete the activity below, based on what you learned about cell phone etiquette. Reread the feature on cell phone etiquette if you need assistance.

1. Why is cell phone etiquette important?

2. Stated most simply, what are the basics of cell phone etiquette?

3. Name two rules for cell phone use and give examples of how location and circumstances might cause them to be modified.

4. Think of three specific occasions when you should use the mute or vibrate options on your phone.

5. Why do you think others would want you to ask permission before taking their picture with your phone?

6. **Business Scenario.** While in a public location—the mall, a restaurant, a theater, at school—take notes while observing the way people around you are using their cell phones. For this activity, your teacher may choose to have you work in groups or have each student individually report his/her observations to the class. If working in groups, combine your notes and summarize the number of times each rule was broken. Report your findings to the class noting any distractions, interruptions, or disruptions caused by the improper cell phone use.

Solutions

Communications Activity Master 1 ***Introductions—More Than Just a First Impression***

1. The purpose of introductions is to lay the foundation for a working relationship between two or more people.
2. Some suggestions are as follows:
 - Offer a greeting, followed by the clear statement of your first and last name. (“Hello, my name is Lucia Delgado.”)
 - If appropriate, explain how you prefer to be addressed. (“Please call me Lucia.”)
 - Give your title and purpose for meeting. (“I’m the director of sales with Fashions Unlimited. I’d like to talk with you about carrying our line.”)
 - Present a firm handshake and make eye contact. Keep in mind that this step may be adapted for various cultures.
 - Offer your business card.
3. An effective introduction is important because it creates a strong and lasting impression that allows the listener to recall your name and connect you with a positive professional image.
4. Good methods for conducting introductions in a business meeting include the following:
 - Ask all participants to introduce themselves, using names and titles. Begin with yourself.
 - Introduce yourself, as well as everyone else at the meeting.
 - Ask one or more co-workers to introduce meeting participants.
5. Some techniques for effective international/cross-cultural introductions are the following:
 - Avoid using slang or jargon your listener may be offended by or not understand.
 - Enunciate words carefully and speak a bit more slowly when addressing individuals whose first language is not English.
 - Try to eliminate cultural stereotypes you may believe in; focus on the individual.
 - Avoid gestures; some could be offensive to the listener.
 - If you have the opportunity, study the individual’s cultural background to be aware of appropriate conventions for introductions.
6. It is important to be culturally sensitive when making introductions because different groups of people have different rules of etiquette.

Communications Activity Master 2 ***Resolving Conflict—It Isn’t All Bad***

1. Conflict can be defined quite simply as competing differences between two or more people. These differences are often caused by struggles over goals, motives, values, ideas, and resources.
2. The consequences of negative, unresolved conflict are decreased productivity, low employee morale, and heightened workplace tensions.
3. Conflict of the right nature can be beneficial to business; friendly conflict can encourage competition, diverse thinking, creativity, and a wider variety of solutions to business problems.
4. Tips for preventing negative conflict in the workplace include the following:

- Be open to others' ideas; listen before making up your mind.
- Avoid stereotyping your co-workers and superiors.
- Do not use language or expressions that may be offensive or demeaning to others.
- Disagree constructively; offer other suggestions or solutions rather than simply rejecting others' ideas.
- Above all, treat your co-workers and superiors with the respect you want them to show you.

5. Answers may include the following:

- Intervention: Ask a co-worker or supervisor to provide a setting for conflict resolution between you and those with whom you are in conflict. A supervisor also might speak on your behalf to the co-worker with whom you are in conflict.
- Confrontation: Approach the co-worker with whom you are having trouble. Both of you must recognize the problem, and then work together toward a solution.
- Compromise: If the conflict involves a disagreement over a particular business issue, you might work out a compromise solution. For example, you may agree with your co-worker's idea in exchange for similar treatment during the next conflict.
- Avoidance: The avoidance technique should be your last solution, but in some situations it may be best. If you simply cannot solve a personality conflict, deal with the individual when you need to but otherwise steer clear.

Communications Activity Master 3 ***Nonverbal Communication--Actions Speak Louder Than Words!***

1. Nonverbal forms of communication play a deciding role in business success.
2. The most common nonverbal messages are conveyed through the following:
 - physical appearance
 - body language
 - emphasis on time
 - use of space
3. Answers will vary, but may include the following: A person slumping in a chair may give the impression of being tired or depressed. A handshake that is too strong and causes pain may give the impression of a person who is overly aggressive or inconsiderate. Also, an individual who fails to make eye contact might be interpreted as dishonest or not listening.
4. A person who is always on time gives the impression of being well-organized, dependable, and appreciative of the importance of business commitments. An individual who stands away from supervisor is interpreted as being afraid or unfriendly.
5. Physical appearance is often the first impression you make on someone and is therefore quite important.
6. In Japan, keeping your eyes lowered is a sign of respect. In the United States, this behavior is often misinterpreted as showing a lack of interest or not listening.

Communications Activity Master 4 ***Teamwork--The Key to Success***

1. It means that doing something you really enjoy will never seem like work.

2. Being a good team player means doing your job to the best of your ability, doing your share of the common workload, supporting your co-workers, and tolerating their faults and weaknesses.
3. Answers will vary; however, people lose their jobs primarily as a result of looking out for themselves instead of working as team players and for neglecting their jobs.
4. Pull your share of the load.
Accept praise gracefully.
Share the credit.
Flatter people sincerely.
Don't flaunt special privileges.
Let everyone be a winner.
5. It means to be able to respect their habits, mannerisms, styles, and attitudes.

Communications Activity Master 5

Modes of Communication—Getting Through to Others

1. The communication process involves the exchange of information and meaning between individuals.
2. Research shows that managers spend approximately 60% to 80% of their work time involved in communicating with others.
3. Similar to the telephone call, electronic mail (e-mail) has become increasingly popular in the business world due to its quick and affordable use. The e-mail message is typically informal and is used when a large amount of detail is required in a request, in instances of requests that are informal, and when work schedules are not conducive to telephone contact.
4. Letters are used to convey official or formal messages. Letters are often used to convey messages of gratitude or information and typically are viewed as the least time-sensitive form of communication.
5. Faxes are used in a manner similar to letters but are more time sensitive and viewed as slightly less formal. Typically, faxes are used only in instances where time pressures are extreme and formality is not important.
6. Begin with a formal letter of introduction, accompanied by company information. Indicate in your letter that you will telephone in a few days. After telephoning the prospective client, use e-mail and follow-up letters to continue communication.

Communications Activity Master 6

Giving Presentations—What Do You Have to Say?

1. You need to know your audience—what they need to learn from you and what audiovisuals will appeal to them and best hold their attention.
2. Answers will vary. Audiovisuals enhance and support a presentation by capturing and holding the audience's attention and by reinforcing the presenter's message. Generally, learning is enhanced by involving more of the senses in the experience.
3. Handouts can be a distraction as members of the audience focus on reading instead of watching and listening.

4. Formal speech: large audience; objective is to be persuasive in stating a position or to make an impression
Question and answer: small audience (100 or less); technical message; objective is to teach or gain "buy in"
Audience participation: objective is entertainment or ritualism
Open dialogue or discussion: small group (10 or less); objective is to learn from the audience or engage the audience in decision-making
Narrations or readings: dramatic, literal presentations of documentary, poetic, or fictional material
Skits and demonstrations: objective is to teach by example; also to entertain
5. Prepare in advance, practice the presentation, test any audiovisual equipment, and anticipate questions.
6. Audiovisual aids: the appliance itself, technical specifications, video
Format: demonstration along with question and answer

Communications Activity Master 7 ***E-Mail Etiquette—It Says a Lot About You***

1. E-mail is like a letter in that it should be written with the same care as a traditional letter. It is different from a phone call because it is quicker and less obtrusive.
2. E-mail etiquette will display your professionalism to others. It can build or harm relationships and it can make or break your career success.
3. An effective e-mail message is brief, covers only one topic, and is courteous and professional.
4. Not sending flaming messages is important because these messages are irretrievable; you probably would not want to say these things to a person's face, so you would not want to send them either.
5. Business e-mail is not private. Your employer owns your e-mail system and can access everything it contains.
6. It would be best to use e-mail when sending a memo to employees or colleagues or when writing a friend. Speaking to someone face-to-face is best in situations where an argument is taking place or the information is private and should not be made public.

Communications Activity Master 8 ***Responding to Criticism—You Think That About Me?***

1. There are two types of criticism, constructive and destructive. Constructive criticism isolates the criticism to one or two specific behaviors or situations and offers techniques for how the behavior or situation can be improved or handled differently. Destructive criticism often includes personal attacks, as well as broad, non-specific statements about behavior.
2. When responding to criticism, you should avoid the following:
 - responding defensively or in anger
 - shifting the blame to others
 - falsely asking for sympathy
 - denying that problems or opportunities for growth exist
 - turning against others

3. To deal effectively with criticism, you should be prepared to view unwelcome comments as an opportunity to grow and improve your performance. Dealing effectively with criticism can also include developing action/professional development plans aimed at improving behaviors, habits, and work performance.
4. Destructive criticism includes personal attacks and broad, generalized statements. It is often based on opinions or second-hand information. It might be conducted in the presence of co-workers.
5. Allow a "cooling-off" period. Request the opportunity to speak privately with the accuser. If job security, pay, or advancement are put at risk, involve a neutral third party or the HR Department to help correct the unfair criticism. In minor situations, ignore the criticism and continue to do your best work. Maintain a positive attitude and behave professionally.

Communications Activity Master 9

Your Resume—Your Portrait in Print

1. A resume is a tool which provides information about yourself to a potential employer.
2. Two of the most popular types of resumes are experience-based and qualifications-based. In an experience-based resume, professional experiences are listed in order of importance or work history. In a qualifications-based resume, your abilities or qualifications appropriate for the type of job you are applying for are highlighted.
3. The Career Objective section demonstrates to employers your motivation and sense of direction and purpose, as well as your fit with the employer's position.
4. False information can prevent you from being hired. False information, found after you have been hired, can lead to your dismissal and long-term career difficulties.
5. According to the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), it is illegal for employers to make hiring decisions based on personal information such as age, marital status, race, gender, etc. Therefore, potential employers prefer not to see this type of information. List only personal information, such as hobbies, memberships, or personal interests, that is appropriate for the job you are applying for.
6. Keys to successful resume writing include the use of action words that demonstrate what you have accomplished or achieved. For example, words such as "organized," "accomplished," "computed," "created," "managed," and "researched" are good action-word choices. Other keys include proofreading and following a strict adherence to honesty about your qualifications.

Communications Activity Master 10

Customer Service—"May I Help You?"

1. Any person who buys a product or service is a customer. Examples are grocery shoppers, bus passengers, dental patients, legal clients, and newspaper buyers.
2. They are important because they can determine whether or not a business makes a profit or even survives.
3. Answers will vary. Students may tell of a patient in a doctor's office describing a specific pain or a person e-mailing an Internet retailer with a request for a specific service.

4. They conduct market research, provide customer-oriented products and services, set pricing and sales policies to appeal to their customers, craft persuasive advertising messages, establish customer service policies, and provide customer service training to their employees. Answers will vary.
5. Answers will vary. Some examples are: “What color do you prefer?” “How short do you want your hair on the sides?” and “How will you use this saw?”

Communications Activity Master 11

The Media—Use It to Your Advantage

1. Answers should include four of the following: newspapers, television, radio, Web logs, and other printed materials such as magazines, newsletters, and journals.
2. Various media are used by business and industry to convey messages about products, personnel, and events. The media is also used as a primary form of advertising.
3. The following five tips will help ensure that your news release will be successful and appealing:
 - Be brief and clear.
 - Include who, what, when, where, why, and how.
 - Give details in order of importance, from most to least.
 - Provide your preferred release date.
 - Include the name of a contact person.
4. Answers may vary, but could include the following: Consumers and business leaders are often required to interpret or analyze media messages and their implications. For example, stockholders may predict an increase in their company's value if a dynamic new leader is announced in *The Wall Street Journal*. Similarly, an announcement of a factory closing may hurt the public image of a company.
5. The generally accepted press release format includes the following points of style:
 - The release should be double spaced.
 - It should be printed on company letterhead.
 - Special instructions should be typed in all capital letters across the top of the release.
 - The release should end with a “-30-” or “###” to indicate completion of information.

Communications Activity Master 12

Active Listening—“What I Heard You Say Was. . .”

1. Listening. About 45% of the time.
2. In addition to hearing, it means processing and working to understand what is said.
3. Some people get into the habit of spending listening time planning a reply instead of actively listening.
4. Answers will vary. Students may suggest things like maintaining eye contact, looking for nonverbal cues, and listening for signals of what is to come from the speaker.
5. You will understand better and remember longer what is said to you.

Communications Activity Master 13

Visual Aids—Seeing Is Believing

1. Visual aids assist the sender in conveying messages more persuasively and more accurately. The receiver benefits from the visual communication through enhanced clarity and recall ability.
2. PowerPoint and Flash presentations are the current business standard.
3. Answers will vary, but should include three of the following:
 - Keep your design simple.
 - Include only one major idea per visual.
 - To maximize effectiveness, be selective in how many visuals you choose to use.
 - Position yourself to enable the audience to clearly view the visuals.
 - Make an effort to paraphrase rather than reading your visuals line by line.
 - Proofread visuals carefully.
 - Make sure visuals are large enough to be seen by the entire audience.
 - Avoid distorting facts on visuals; be concise and accurate.
4. Answers will vary, but should include two of the following:

pie charts	organization charts	bar graphs
flowcharts	line graphs	pictographs
5. Information should be portrayed accurately because it is unethical to misrepresent data.
6. Visual aids are varied and commonly include overhead transparencies, electronic slide presentations, posters, videos, models, flip charts, computerized images, and chalkboards or dry erase boards.
7. Answers will vary. Photos may be altered by adding, moving, altering, or deleting elements. Some common methods are: changing the face on a person in a photo, cropping out elements that may betray the "truth" of the photo, putting elements into the photo that weren't really there, and changing the relative position of objects or persons in the photo.

Communications Activity Master 14

Telephone Skills—Opportunity Is Calling

1. Each customer call represents an opportunity to gain, lose, or retain their business. You enhance your value to the organization by practicing good telephone techniques and etiquette.
2. Lack of skill in using a telephone system can result in dropped calls, misrouted calls, callers overhearing conversations they should not hear, ineffective use of voice mail, an inability to set up conference calls, etc. Callers may be inconvenienced, frustrated, or angered by those problems, which could result in lost business.
3. Answers will vary, but look for such things as callers not getting the information they need, getting misinformation, having to call back, and being offended, confused, irritated, inconvenienced, frustrated, or angered.
4. Route the caller to someone who can help and stay on the line with them until they are connected. If you can't connect them with anyone else, apologize and take a detailed message, then follow up. It's important that the caller get the information they need. Staying on the line while you transfer a call will ensure that the extension is actually answered and that the person answering can help the caller. Taking a message for someone else and following up ensures that the caller's needs aren't ignored.

5. Answers may vary. It is good business etiquette and lets the caller to know that you received their message. It also demonstrates that you feel the caller is important to your organization.
6. Answers may vary. You may be interrupted by someone in high authority (the company president, for example). You may have to deal with an emergency. You might need to answer a page. You might be the only one in the office and another line is ringing. Whatever the reason, politely interrupt your caller, offer a few words of explanation—"Please forgive me for interrupting, but I'm alone and need to answer the other line. Can you hold for just a moment? I'll be right back."—then thank the caller for holding.

Communications Activity Master 15

Letters—A Communication Cornerstone

1. Letters are a common form of communication written for different purposes. For example, letters might be used to solve a problem, answer a question, provide information, or say, "Thank you."
2. Typically, the two classifications of letters in the workplace are employer-to-employee letters and business letters.
3. Employer-to-employee letters are often used to convey personnel issues or concerns. Personnel issues might include the following:
 - Compliance with workplace safety or federal guidelines
 - Informing employees of job benefits or changes or benefit plans
 - News about changes in the organization: mergers, acquisitions, relocation, etc.
 - Invitations to company-sponsored events
 - Special recognition for service or a special effort
4. Some types of business letters are inquiries, good and bad news, expressions of thanks, congratulatory, sales, and requests. Depending on their purpose, business letters will vary in tone, length, formality, and expectation of a response. Good news letters and expressions of gratitude might contain a humorous or light-hearted tone. Sales letters might be long, detailing special features of a product or service or explaining special offers. Bad news letters might be somber or stern. Inquiries and requests would convey an expectation of a timely response. Congratulatory letters might be very formal.
5. The components of the standard letter format include the following:
 - Writer's address
 - Date
 - Receiver's address
 - Subject line
 - Salutation (greeting)
 - Body of the letter
 - Complimentary closing (Sincerely, Yours truly, etc.)
 - Signature block
 - Enclosure notation
6. Business letters should always be created with the goal of building or preserving good relationships, whether with customers, suppliers, service providers, creditors, regulators, investors or others.

Communications Activity Master 16

Giving and Following Directions—Easier Said Than Done

1. Span of control means that the work required to run a business is broken down into areas of responsibility (usually defined by function, but sometimes by location) and delegated to managers, or supervisors, along with the employees who report to them.
2. Directions are messages given to employees about actions required and decisions to be made. Directions can be either written or verbal and can be expressed formally, informally, or in an implied manner.
3. Answers may include any of the following six steps:
 - Define the problem.
 - Identify problem solutions.
 - Evaluate the potential solutions.
 - Choose the solution with the greatest benefit.
 - Act on your choice of solutions.
 - Review your results.
4. Standard operating procedures are established methods of performing specific tasks or making decisions commonly applied throughout an organization. They are important because they provide efficiency when communicating directions.
5. Decisions that would fall within a traveling sales person's span of control would probably include the selection and timing of his/her client contacts, travel plans, and overnight accommodations. Things that would probably fall outside their span of control would include their travel budget, sales goals, and incentive offers.
6. Directions can be either written or verbal and can be expressed formally, informally, or in an implied manner.
7. If you don't understand completely, ask questions. Misunderstood directions will lead to incorrect action or inaction.

Communications Activity Master 17

Summarizing—Keep It Short and Simple

1. Summaries are important to people who don't have adequate time to read or listen to full reports or presentations.
2. A good summary should be no more than one page, have little or no detail, omit illustrations or examples, state the central issue or problem, and list principal results or findings.
3. Examples include: proposal, problem, transaction, meeting or some other event, news report or a teacher reviewing a lesson from the previous class.
4. Answers will vary.
5. Abstract, synopsis, executive summary.
6. A single page is easy to read and absorb

Communications Activity Master 18

Negotiation—Finding a Win/Win Solution

1. Negotiation is a process and a tool used by professionals to build bridges between conflicting attitudes and ways of thinking. It allows for airing, and reaching a mutual understanding, of the differences and commonalities between conflicting positions in order to reach mutual agreement.
2. Answers may include any of the following:
 - What is your belief or attitude about the issue?
 - What are the major elements of your argument?
 - As you understand it, what is the conflicting belief or attitude?
 - What are the major points of disagreement in the conflict?
 - What commonalities exist between the two viewpoints?
 - Is there a compromise you would agree to?
3. Answers will vary, but may include use of the family car, balancing chores at home with outside activities, and deciding among your friends how you will spend time after school.
4. The negotiator must identify the conflicting viewpoints, establish a comfortable and trusting environment free from judgment, allow all parties involved to state their case and build an argument in favor of it, then bridge differences by identifying commonalities between the two sides.
5. All parties gain something from the final agreement—no party "loses."

Communications Activity Master 19

Proofreading—Readability Insurance

1. Proofreading is important in all forms of business communication because it helps eliminate errors that might reflect poorly on the writer's skill, intelligence, and attitude. Also, written documents should be proofread to ensure that all information is presented correctly and clearly in order to guarantee readability.
2. Check for typos, spelling, and grammatical errors, double-check dates and figures, and make sure the content is clear and complete. The goal should be readability.
3. Readers want and need to be able to quickly understand what they are reading.
4. Check for errors on the first reading (such as those listed in the answer to Question #2), double-check all dates and figures, then read the document a second time to make sure it is clear and readable. Try to have more than one person read through the document, especially if it is an important piece. It can also be helpful to read aloud.
5. As the writer, you are familiar with the content of your document, which can cause you to overlook errors. Another reader seeing it for the first time will see errors that you may have repeatedly overlooked.

Communications Activity Master 20

Meetings—Set the Agenda!

1. Meetings are held to convey information, to do planning, to report and evaluate progress, to gather or to provide feedback on activities, to prepare documents, to express gratitude, and to provide a means of introduction.

2. Virtual meetings are the gathering of two or more individuals through telephone and/or computer connections.
3. An outline of the information to be discussed or covered during a meeting. In a sense, an agenda is a plan for a meeting.
4. Agenda items often include the following:
 - Call to order and roll check (generally for formal or large group meetings only)
 - Review of the minutes from the previous meeting (if this is not a first meeting)
 - Discussion on "old" (previously discussed) business
 - Discussion on new business
 - Discussion and assignments on action items
 - Announcements
 - Adjournment
5. Meetings with clients generally do not follow a specific format.
6. You should develop skills such as listening, giving presentations, offering feedback, negotiating, and promoting teamwork to help you facilitate meetings. You should also practice using the technologies employed in virtual meetings so you can use them seamlessly and unobtrusively when needed.

Communications Activity Master 21

Memos—Big on Information, Small on Space

1. "Please deliver ...," "Please complete this project by ...," "Will you send ...," "Read," "Review," "Respond."
2. An effective memo is brief; direct; and contains the date, sender and receivers' names, and the subject.
3. Memos provide a record of activities and events in the workplace. Memos are also useful because they are easy and inexpensive to send, and because they stand out amid all the e-mail people receive daily.
4. Answers will vary, but students may suggest the following: Office announcements, notification of upcoming meetings or events, requests for information, providing information, or confirmations are all good reasons to send a memo.
5. Memos are a professional form of communication and a reflection on the writer; they will be more clearly understood and treated more seriously if written carefully.

Communications Activity Master 22

The Job Interview—Your Gateway to Success

1. You are very likely to hold several jobs during your lifetime. For each of them, you will probably need to interview at least once, and often more than once. While having the necessary skills and aptitudes is the primary requirement for obtaining any job, a high percentage of qualified job applicants get turned down because they don't interview well.
2. Practice will enable you to polish your answers, help you avoid missteps, and give you confidence when you engage your interviewer.

3. Answers should include the following:
 - Research the company you are going to interview with.
 - Dress appropriately.
 - Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early.
 - Clearly introduce yourself to the person who greets you.
 - Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake, eye contact, and a smile.
 - Listen carefully to the questions you are asked and answer them thoughtfully and fully, but concisely.
 - Ask questions!
 - At the conclusion of the interview, confidently restate your interest in the job and state how you believe you can help the company achieve its goals; then thank the interviewer for his/her time.
 - Follow up promptly with a sincere thank you letter.
4. Never smoke, chew gum, put your feet up off the floor, or set anything on the interviewer's desk. Never interrupt, lie, or stretch the truth. Never answer a cell phone during the interview.
5. To be certain that it is your enthusiasm and qualifications for the job that remain with the interviewer after you've gone, not a poor impression of you.

Communications Activity Master 23
Cell Phone Etiquette—It's Not Just About You

1. Because the way you use your cell phone in public says a lot about you both personally and professionally.
2. Be courteous and considerate of others in your presence.
3. Answers will vary but should identify two of the following:
 - Use the mute feature or vibrate option appropriately whenever a ringing phone would cause a distraction, an interruption, or a disruption.
 - Don't subject others to the intimate (nor banal) details of your conversations.
 - Keep your conversations brief. If it's going to be long and it can't be avoided, excuse yourself and go somewhere private.
 - Practice restraint in your choice of ringtones.
 - If your phone is also a camera, ask permission before taking pictures of others.
 - Don't try to talk or text while engaged in something else that requires your undivided attention.
4. Answers will vary but might include: in a theater, during an interview, at church, or in class.
5. Again, answers will vary, but should include the recognition that it is never polite to secretly photograph anyone when they do not know how the image(s) will be used.