

Communications: SPEAKING SKILLS Activities



Did You Get That?

- 1.) A facilitator will set the stage with the group that a transactional speaking example will be presented, participants will share their observations surrounding the example, and work in groups to create and then share an improved example.
 - While the person is speaking, pay attention to the transactional speaking skills demonstrated (or lack thereof).
- 2.) Either the facilitator or “volunteer” from the training audience will read and act out the embedded cues in the below script. The acting cues are indicated by brackets and italicized text: [*example text*].

Setting: 4-H Club Meeting → Adult Leader shares information related to participation in an upcoming holiday parade.

Script: [*Avoid eye contact with the group; look at the paper or glance out and above the audience; appear distracted and rushed*]. **Good afternoon, everyone! Quick update on the parade Tuesday** [*check your watch*]. **Anyone participating in the parade needs to meet our group behind the old firehouse at least 30 minutes before the parade starts. Parents, you can pick up your kids at the end of the parade route.** [*pick up your phone to check it*]. **If we’re successful, we’ll have that pizza party you all have been wanting so badly. If anyone has any questions, just let me know...** [*quickly leave the front of the audience so no one has the opportunity to ask questions*].

- 3.) The facilitator will seek input and feedback based on the observations of the example. What lingering questions do you anticipate you would have as a person in the audience?
 - Issues with provided, scripted example:
 - Speaker appears distracted and rushed
 - Speaker checks their watch and other devices
 - Speaker assumes there is some prior knowledge/understanding (are there any new people or guest in the audience?)
 - Little to no eye contact
 - Potentially vague: “Tuesday”, who can participate, can parents participate, meeting location and time (before and after parade), what is “successful”, how to ask questions/contact information.
- 4.) Participants will work in groups to develop an improved example, keeping in mind what information needs to be communicated and anticipate/address questions the audience members might have.



- 5.) Reflect on improved examples. How will you use your experience from participating in this activity moving forward?

Source: Written by T. Ashley Burns, Clemson University

Paper-Tearing Exercise

- 1.) Pass out a sheet of paper to everyone and tell them the following: “We’re going to play a game that will show some important things about communication. Pick up a sheet of paper and hold it in front of you. Now, close your eyes and follow the directions I will give you—and no peeking! You cannot ask questions.”
- 2.) Give the following directions, carrying them out yourself with your own sheet of paper and pausing after each instruction to give the group time to comply:
 - Fold your sheet of paper in half.
 - Tear off the upper right-hand corner.
 - Fold it in half again and tear off the upper left-hand corner.
 - Fold it in half again and tear off the lower right-hand corner.
- 3.) After the tearing is complete, say something like, “Now open your eyes, and let’s see what you have. If I did a good job of communicating and you did a good job of listening, all of our sheets should look the same!”
- 4.) Hold your sheet up for them to see and discuss outcome.
 - It is highly unlikely any sheet will match yours exactly.
 - How are our papers different?
 - Why don’t our papers match?
 - How could a different communication method have helped us with this activity?

Source: Strieter, L. (2008). *Communications: Overview of Communications. Lesson Plan. VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency. 4-H.org*

Interpersonal Introductions

- 1.) Break into groups of 4 to 6 people.
- 2.) Challenge: Each person in the group will be given a secret, social cue. Using the prompt provided by the facilitator, role play a conversation about [*insert non-controversial topic – like introductions and the weather*] for 2 minutes. (Do not tell others in the group what role you have.)
 - The facilitator will have pre-labeled pieces of paper with the following social roles on them:
 - i. Interrupter: You love to interrupt the person talking with impertinent comments.
 - ii. Close Talker: You get in everyone’s personal space when they talk.



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- iii. Bragger: You always turn the conversation to you and brag about your own experiences.
- iv. Distracted: You occasionally participate in the conversation, but you have more important things to do elsewhere (wrap it up).
- v. Hater: You don't like or agree with anything anyone says.
- vi. Facilitator: You try your best to engage everyone in the group to get their input, keeping the conversation light-hearted and on topic.

3.) Discussion and reflection (Share roles and dynamics of the interaction)

Source: Written by T. Ashley Burns, Clemson University

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Program Leaders Working Group: 4-H Volunteerism Committee
Activities compiled by
T. Ashley Burns, Clemson University



Communications: LISTENING SKILLS Activities



Listening Inventory

- 1.) Take an online Listening Skills Inventory
 - Potential options:
 - How Good Are Your Listening Skills? by Mind Tools (online): <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/listening-quiz.htm>
 - Self-Assessment for Active Listening by Center for Executive Excellence (printable): https://executiveexcellence.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ActiveListening-SelfAssessment_Fillable.pdf
- 2.) Discuss Results
 - What are some things you do that make you an active listener?
 - How comfortable are you with your skills as an active listener?
 - What might be a potential strategy to be a better listener?

Shhhh. Just Listen...

- 1.) Work in pairs - Select one person to be the listener and one person to be the speaker.
- 2.) Challenge: The listener has to get the speaker to continue talking for five minutes, but can only make three statements during the time period.
 - The speaker will talk about a situation that was a joyous occasion (ex. might be an award, a special event, a new job, etc.).
- 3.) Switch roles after five minutes.
- 4.) Return to whole group for reflection and discussion. The discussion that follows concentrates on how:
 - The speaker felt when the person just listened and did not exchange information
 - The nonverbal signals encouraged the speaker
 - Uncomfortable the silence was
 - It felt to just listen without having the pressure to contribute
 - The speaker felt having the freedom to say whatever they felt

Source: Listening & Communication Exercises by Work Smart Blog, Posted online by Leslie Orr
<http://blog.trainerswarehouse.com/communication-exercises>



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What's Your Problem?

- 1.) Work in Pairs: One person is a club leader, one person is an upset parent or volunteer.
- 2.) Role play: The club leader practices active listening and tries to diffuse the tense situation. The parent/volunteer is upset because of [*fill in any scenario*].
- 3.) Discussion: The best way to diffuse a tense situation is to use active listening – it is important that the person knows you hear what they are saying. It is also important not to make any promises at that stage of the exchange. Acknowledge the person's frustration and let them vent. Then, move on to problem solving – get the person to help in solving the problem and then work on solving it together.

Source: Listening & Communication Exercises by Work Smart Blog, Posted online by Tom Lord
<http://blog.trainerswarehouse.com/communication-exercises>

Clip in My Pocket

- 1.) Distribute something to write on and with if needed.
- 2.) Tell the group: "I have a clip in my pocket. It opens, closes, and holds things together. Without letting your neighbor see what you write, jot down a description of the type of clip you think it is."
- 3.) Go around the room and share what everyone wrote down (list them on the flip chart and note the number of times a similar description is mentioned).
- 4.) All of you heard the same thing: "I have a clip in my pocket. It opens, closes and holds things."
- 5.) Ask the group these questions:
 - a. You received the very same information, so why are there this many different types of clips listed?
 - b. Why do you think it is the particular type of clip you wrote down?
 - c. How does your personal perspective influence your interpretation of what is said?
 - d. What questions could you ask to figure out what type of clip it is other than "What kind of clip is it"?
- 6.) By asking questions, you are developing a pool of shared meaning. Show the group the clip.

Source: Reaman, K. (2008). Communications: Overview of Communications. Lesson Plan. VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency. 4-H.org

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Activities compiled by

Jen Lobley, University of Maine



Communications: WRITING SKILLS Activities

What's Wrong with this Message?

- 1.) Provide a few different email/text message samples.
- 2.) Ask participants to identify what type of communication each represents.
 - Text message to 4-H Club members: Hey everyone! Looking forward to seeing you at our club meeting later this week! Don't forget your stuff and be sure to bring the form.
 - Email message re: preparation for the Fair Exhibit Hall: Don't forget to bring you're projects too the exhibit Hall next week on tuesday. We talked about the steps you need to follow at are last meeting. remember there is a limit on how many things you can enter. Call me if you have questions.
 - Letter to 4-H Leaders' Association: Dear leaders - I think you made a bad decision when you took away some of the camp scholarships. Our 4-H members really enjoy going to the state 4-H camp but now they can't go because of the decision you made about reducing the number of scholarships. You should really offer more scholarships.
- 3.) Review (transactional, persuasive, instructional, informational) and point out what could be improved based on writing tips provided in the Writing Skills Fact Sheet.
- 4.) As an alternate activity, ask participants to choose one type of communication related to their 4-H experience and draft a message for a partner to review and critique.

Write it Up!

- 1.) Many county 4-H programs have newsletters or share activities and events on social media.
 - 2.) Ask participants to choose a recent event or activity (club, county, state or national) and write up a concise but informative blurb. Have them address the Five W's (who, what, where, when and why).
 - 3.) Share write ups in small groups or pairs for feedback.
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Communications: NONVERBAL SKILLS Activities



Brainstorm It!

- 1.) In one minute, have participants write down as many examples of nonverbal communication as they can.
- 2.) Go around the room and have people share their list, writing down all the examples. This part can be turned into a competition (inspired by the game Scattergories) by giving individuals get one point for each *unique* answer they have. (If no one else wrote down that same nonverbal cue they get a point.) The person(s) with the most points after everyone has shared wins!
- 3.) Review the list and group cues by the following categories:
 1. How words are spoken (tone, pitch, pace),
 2. Body language (gestures, facial expressions, posture),
 3. Non-language sounds (whistling, clapping, sighing),
 4. Visual cues (symbols, motions), and
 5. Tactile responses (touching)
- 4.) Review and discuss. What type of cue was most commonly mentioned? What cues do you think have the most powerful communication? What cues could be misinterpreted?

The Power of Nonverbal

- 1.) Ask individuals to work in pairs. One person in the pair will be the designated speaker and the other person will communicate with nonverbal cues only.
- 2.) Challenge: The speaker will continue talking (about any subject) regardless of the cues the other person is giving to two minutes. The non-speaker will roll a dice to determine what message they will be giving off with nonverbal cues. (If the facilitator wants to keep the adjectives secret from the speaker, they can simply whisper the desired cue or have pre-labeled pieces of paper.)
 1. Engaged - Super interested in what the speaker is saying!
 2. Apathetic - Not interested one bit.
 3. Angry - Very opposed to what the speaker is saying.
 4. Distracted - Interested in speaker, but *really* need to go to the bathroom.
 5. Distracted - Not very interested; anxiously waiting for a call, text, or email.
 6. Tired - Exhausted and having difficulty concentrating.
- 3.) After two minutes, have the speaker try to guess what nonverbal cue was communicated.
- 4.) Switch roles and repeat for two additional minutes.
- 5.) Discuss and reflect on the impact nonverbal cues have on the speaker



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- Share roles and dynamics of the interaction (Ex., Continuing to speak when someone is clearly not interested is very difficult. The speaker can generally figure out what message the nonverbal communication is saying.)

Decipher the Message

- 1.) Using the pictures in the Nonverbal Communication Skills slide deck or other facilitator-selected pictures or video clips, observe an example of nonverbal communication.
 - 2.) Discuss possible interpretations (starting with the participants' perspectives) and describe why those interpretations are valid. (Share in small groups of 4-5 if the audience is more than 15 people. Each group can report back to the larger group.)
 - 3.) If there is an alternative interpretation, the facilitator can share it to emphasize the importance of context, culture, or other meaning in nonverbal communication.
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Communications: INFORMATION DELIVERY AND DISSEMINATION

Activities



Target Audience

- 1.) In small groups or pairs:
 - Choose your target audience.
 - List characteristics of the target audience.
 - Determine how you will market to this audience.
 - List key components you will include in your message.
- 2.) Report out to the larger group.
 - *Would the marketing message change if you had a different target audience?*
- 3.) Change your target audience and discuss with your group how your marketing efforts might change.
- 4.) Review and discuss.

What's your Point?

- 1.) Work in pairs to write down:
 1. Any type of 4-H topic you might want to share with someone else in 4-H.
 2. The objective/purpose of sharing this information.
- 2.) Discuss with your partner two to three different ways you might share the information and the pros and cons for each of them.
- 3.) Review and discuss.

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Communications: MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS Activities

What's Your 4-H Elevator Speech?

- 1.) Lead in: When someone asks you, "What is 4-H?" how do you respond? What are the most important points to include in a response to the question?
- 2.) Brainstorm with the whole group key points that they think should be included in that answer and write them on chart paper.
- 3.) Next, ask individuals to write an elevator speech.
 - An elevator pitch is a brief, persuasive speech that you use to spark interest in what your organization does.
 - A good elevator pitch should last no longer than a short elevator ride of 20 to 30 seconds, hence the name.
 - They should be interesting, memorable, and succinct. They also need to explain what makes your organization unique.
- 4.) Give participants a chance to try out their elevator speech with a partner. Encourage participants to take their elevator speeches with them, practice them and use them to help tell people about 4-H.



Know Your Resources

- 1.) Lead in: It is important for volunteers to know they should always work in partnership with 4-H staff when marketing the 4-H program.
- 2.) What kind of resources does 4-H offer for marketing and public relations?
- 3.) Give participants time to explore the National 4-H Council Marketing Online Resource Center (MORC) at <https://4-h.org/professionals/marketing-resources/>
- 4.) Share LGU logos and expectations regarding local and state marketing and promotion of the 4-H program.
- 5.) Share and review key points about use of the 4-H Name and Emblem. <https://nifa.usda.gov/4-h-name-and-emblem>

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Communications: TECHNOLOGY Activities



Exploring the Benefits of Technology

- 1.) Lead in: When someone mentions “technology” to you, what do you think of? What feelings does the word invoke?
- 2.) As a group, brainstorm examples of technology in the room/space you are in.
 - Do not forget some of the most basic forms of technology that we take for granted (Ex., writing utensils, clothing, shoes, hair products, glasses/contacts, etc.)
- 3.) Next, in small groups, take 5-10 minutes to discuss the following two questions.
 - What benefits can technology provide to you?
 - What benefits can technology provide to the youth you work with?
- 4.) Review and discuss.

Grow your Digital Literacy

- 1.) As an individual, brainstorm a list of technology areas where you feel weak and would like to improve. (These can be specific or broad.)
- 2.) Take approximately 10 minutes to mingle throughout the room.
 - Individuals will pair up for 60 seconds so that each person can share one area of technology where they would like to improve. If the partner is skilled in that area or knows of a good training resource, they can share.
 - When cued, individuals will find a new partner to share for 60 seconds.
 - Continue switching until all potential pairs have formed or time expires.
- 3.) Discuss.
 - Were there common themes shared? (This could inform future trainings.)
 - Did you find people you interacted with had the same weakness or complementary strengths? Were you able to share a good resource to help someone?
- 4.) To wrap up this activity, have participants set a personal goal with a realistic timeline outlining where to gain knowledge and how to practice their skills related to one area of technology they would like to improve.

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