



United States
Department of
Agriculture

NIFA

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture



[https://nifa.usda.gov/
program/4-h-positive-youth-
development](https://nifa.usda.gov/program/4-h-positive-youth-development)



National Aeronautics
and Space
Administration

EXPEDITIONARY
SKILLS FOR LIFE

A FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP FOR STEM EDUCATION

LESSON PLAN: ACTIVITY 3.4

BUILDING BLOCK COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE!

LESSON DETAILS

AGE/GRADE LEVEL

High School

LEARNER OUTCOMES

Youth will understand how to communicate in a team setting.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Youth will demonstrate the 5 “Be’s” of team communication.

LIFE SKILLS

Teamwork, Problem Solving, Cooperation, Communication, Accepting Differences, Leadership, Contributions to group effort.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

21st Century: Learning and Innovation Skills/CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING/Solve Problems/Identify and ask significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions.

PREP TIME

15 minutes

ACTIVITY TIME

40 minutes

MATERIALS LIST

- small interlocking blocks (alternatively use soft clay or modeling clay)
- re-sealable bags
- paper
- a timer
- index cards
- pencils or pens.

SUGGESTED SPACE

table and chairs for each small group

SUGGESTED GROUP SIZE

Small groups of 4-6 youth

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prior to activity, create a simple structure using 20-25 interlocking blocks (or clay). For each team, place into a resealable bag the blocks (or clay) that they will need to recreate the simple structure.

Write the following roles on individual note cards:

Builder
Runner
Viewer
Observer

Each youth will need ONE card. If you have more than four on a team, create additional Observer cards.

RESOURCE

[5 Important Tips for Team Communication](http://www.teamworkandleadership.com/2012/02/five-important-tips-for-effective-team-communication-1.html)
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INTRODUCTION

Communication is important among members of a team in order to accomplish their goals. Each member of a team is different. They each have cultural backgrounds, experiences and sometimes languages that can influence their communications, perspectives and opinions. These differences can have value as each member contributes to achieving the team’s goals. Remember to “Be” these five things when communicating.

Be Clear. The expectation must be set that if any team member is not clear, they are responsible to ask.

Be Present. Each team member must make a commitment to *really listen*, seek to understand one another, use appropriate body language and ask clarifying questions.

Be Polite. Cutting people off when they are talking, not saying “thank you” “excuse me” and “please,” personally attacking team members and being mean are all examples of poor team manners that can result in poor work communication on teams.

Be Flexible. Team members need to be flexible enough to support decisions different to their own desires. Supporting the decision doesn’t mean that everyone has to agree, but they must be willing to help make whatever has been decided a success.

Be Kind. Team members must be careful to never talk bad or gossip about each other. If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.

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EXPEDITIONARY SKILLS FOR LIFE

BUILDING BLOCK COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE, CONTINUED

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ACTIVITY 1: BUILD IT (40 MINUTES)

Have you ever worked with a group of people? People on a team need to work with each other. Every person is a little different. They may know different things, have special skills or come from other places. Each person helps to reach a team's goals. Imagine if you couldn't communicate; how would you feel? In what ways would you be able to complete a task?

Today we are going to complete a team challenge. There are different roles you may play.

The Builder (1) receives a bag of building blocks. The Builder is the only person who may touch the blocks. The builder takes direction from the Runner. The Builder may not speak and may not see the model.

The Runner (1) tells the Builder what the Viewer told him/her. When the Runner can't remember any more details or wants to confirm a detail or ask questions, the Runner and Viewer may converse twice about the details. After that, they have to communicate without spoken language. The Runner may not touch the blocks - the Runner may only tell the Builder what to do.

The Viewer (1) sees the original model. The Viewer looks at the original model and tells the Runner all the details he/she can remember about the model. The Viewer may not see what the Builder is doing; only the Runner may see what is being built. The Viewer has three passes to look at the structure for 30 seconds after the initial 3 minutes.

The Observers (1-3) are the other team members who will write down what they see about the communication. What did you see? Do the Builders know what they are being told to do? If not, what happened? Observers may only watch - they may not talk or answer questions.

Directions:

1. Have youth draw cards to determine which role they will be playing. Send youth into groups- make sure you have one Builder, one Runner and one Viewer. You may have several observers.
2. Set up your original structure in a secure space. Set a timer for 3 minutes. Invite the Viewers to view the original model.

3. Set timer for fifteen minutes. Groups proceed to build duplicate structures following the above stated rules.
4. When the 15 minutes are up, bring each group together. Have the groups look at their structure and compare it to the original.

Discuss:

1. What did the observers notice?
2. How did participants feel in their roles? What was challenging about this exercise?
3. How similar is the group model to the original model?
4. Were you able to communicate without using words? How would you apply these skills when communicating with others who may not speak English?

DEBRIEF ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

1. Explain that there is give and take in any interaction. An export is what you give during the activity and an import is what you take/gain during the activity.
2. Give participants an index card and pencil/pen and ask them to write one thing they imported on the front of the card and one thing they exported on the back of the card.
3. Take about 10 minutes and have participants share with the group what they recorded on their cards.

Any interaction has some degree of give and take. You might be able to write three or four things on each side of your card for this activity - there is no right or wrong number of responses. We need to remember that we all have to work with other people in our life. Make sure you are importing and exporting during each and every interaction and ensure you are contributing to solving the problem at hand.

Variations

With more time this activity can be repeated, giving all participants the opportunity to try the different roles of the task. If you used blocks for the original activity, you can try it with clay or other materials.

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EXPEDITIONARY SKILLS FOR LIFE

BUILDING BLOCK COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE, CONTINUED

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APPLIED CHALLENGE

The Peace Corp’s “The Blind Men and the Elephant” lesson (https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/blind-men-and-elephant/) enables youth to examine the importance of perspective in how people perceive things. It uses a retelling of a traditional folk tale from India that illustrates how different people can have distinctly different perceptions of the same thing. Youth discuss how each blind men’s arguments differ when understanding an elephant. Even when presented with a real elephant, each man could “see” only what he already believed to be true.

The story and this lesson is intended to encourage youth to develop perspective awareness—awareness that each of us creates a unique view of the world based on personal experience, language, and culture.

INSTRUCTOR’S NOTES

Horizontal lines for instructor notes



ACTIVITY 3.4: LEARNER ASSESSMENT

These questions are about things you learned during this activity. Please check the circle that best describes you.

Q1 I can say "no" when I can't do something.

- Not at all like me
- A little like me
- Somewhat like me
- A lot like me

Q2 I have respect for everyone's opinion, even if it is different from my own.

- Not at all like me
- A little like me
- Somewhat like me
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Q3 I ask for help when I need it.

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