

## Phone and E-mail Etiquette

### The **BIG** Idea

- How can I use the phone and e-mail to communicate effectively with adults?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

II. Phone Tap Game (15 minutes)

III. Can't Fail E-mail (5 minutes)

IV. Switch and Fix (15 minutes)

V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 32, Good Telephone Skills Checklist
- Student Handbook page 33, Can't Fail E-mail

#### FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW
- Facilitator Resource 2, Script
- Facilitator Resource 3, Phone Tap Calls, one copy per group of three to four students

Overhead projector and/or chart paper

Notebook paper

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Recognize there are different rules for phoning and e-mailing adults.
- Discuss the benefits of using proper etiquette, and learn when to choose a more formal approach.
- List and practice effective phone and e-mail habits.

## OVERVIEW

Students discover that communicating effectively with adults requires different skills than those they use with friends. This lesson teaches when and how to adopt the more formal, correct etiquette, for both phone and e-mail communications. A group game hones students' telephone skills, and an e-mail activity reinforces proper Internet correspondence.

## PREPARATION

- List the day's **Big Idea** and activities on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Student Handbook page 32, Good Telephone Skills Checklist**
  - **Student Handbook page 33, Can't Fail E-mail**
- Obtain chewing gum (optional, but adds fun).
- Bring in a phone to use as a prop (cell or toy).
- Make copies of **Facilitator Resource 3, Phone Tap Calls**, one copy per group of three.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When kids talk to each other on the phone, or send e-mails via the Internet, they use slang, code, and “creative” punctuation (if any). They need to know that communicating with adults calls for a more formal approach. If they want to be taken seriously when networking, applying for a job, soliciting information, or functioning in a workplace, they must use the proper etiquette for phone and e-mail exchanges. During class they will learn, and practice, effective skills for making phone calls and writing e-mails.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

### DO NOW:

(You may choose to present the **Warm Up** activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or overhead, and have students write only their answers on index cards. You could also choose to give the students a handout by copying **Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW.**)

#### Questions:

1. List three rules for having a polite phone conversation with an adult.  
(e.g.: Don't eat, drink, or chew gum while speaking)
2. Imagine you need to write an e-mail to an adult. How should this e-mail look different than an e-mail to a friend?

[Once students have completed their work, begin with the **Warm Up** as written. Students will share their responses to these questions where noted in the lesson plan.]

For classes that don't have the maturity to do **Activity II: Phone Tap Game** independently in groups, you can do it as an entire class. If you decide to do it as a class, choose two volunteers to play the parts of the adult listener and the caller; the rest of the class will act as tappers. After the volunteers have acted out their conversations, have the class evaluate the caller and offer constructive criticism. Then choose new volunteers and repeat. **NOTE:** If you decide to do this as a whole class activity, you'll need to make extra copies of **Student Handbook page 32, Good Telephone Skills Checklist.**

If you run short of time, drop **Activity IV, "Switch and Fix."** But make sure to complete **Activity III, "Can't Fail E-mail,"** so the students will understand the etiquette of e-mailing adults, and be able to practice on their own.

Conversely, if you have plenty of time and are in a school that allows each student to work on a computer, you can do "Switch and Fix" the following way: Have students log onto their computers, and access an e-mail writing screen. Then ask them to write a three- to five-sentence e-mail to a friend (as described below). Leaving this e-mail on their computer screen, the students then switch seats, moving to the computer on their right. In a new e-mail, they rewrite the letter and fix it so it's appropriate to send to an adult.

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** This week, we're beginning a new unit on networking and communication. Today, we'll talk about how to use the phone and e-mail in business situations. Later, we'll learn about networking—how to make business connections and stay in touch. It's easier than you think, and it's a skill you'll use for the rest of your life.

How many of you make telephone calls?

[All hands should go up.]

If you call a friend and a parent answers, do you speak to the parent differently than you would your friend? Are you a little more polite and formal? [Students respond; some may be willing to show you both styles.]

Most of us have different "phone voices" for different circumstances. With friends it's OK to be relaxed and informal. But adults expect a little more. Suppose I had to call your parents and explain today's lesson. What do you think their impression would be if I sounded like *this*...

[Pop the gum in your mouth, pick up your phone, and chew loudly as you read **Facilitator Resource 2, Script.**]

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What would your parents think of me? Would they be impressed? Would they want me to teach you how to succeed in the work world? [Students respond.]

### II. Phone Tap Game (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Everyone needs good telephone skills to be taken seriously and make a positive impression. There are some basic skills everyone ought to know.

**What rules should you follow when talking to an adult on the phone?** [Record students' responses on the board or chart paper. (This question refers to number 1 on the DO NOW.)]

[**Display Student Handbook page 32, Good Telephone Skills** using an overhead projector or chart paper. Instruct students to turn to this student handbook page. On the overhead, check off all the skills your students already identified, and then have volunteers read the rest of the skills aloud.]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Keeping these skills in mind, we're going to play a game called "Phone Tap." Anyone know what a "phone tap" is? [Students respond. They'll probably know, from watching spy movies and TV detective shows.]

A phone tap is when someone listens in on a phone conversation. And, that's what you're going to do in this game: listen in on each other's calls.

3. [Organize students into groups of three (four if there are extra students). Give each group one copy of **Facilitator Resource 3, Phone Tap Calls**. Instruct the students to take turns being the caller, the adult listener, and the tapper—the person who listens in, or "taps" the call. If there are four in a group, assign two to work together as tappers. (See **Implementation Options** for suggestions.)]

[Explain the rules of the game: tappers write the name of the caller they are tapping on top of their **Student Handbook page 32, Good Telephone Skills Checklist**. During the call, the tapper checks off what the caller does right, and also makes notes to provide the caller with constructive feedback. For example, a tapper might note, "You remembered to spell your name, but you went too fast for someone to write it down," or "You were polite, but you referred to the manager as 'the guy.'" Instruct listeners to cooperate with the caller's requests, and keep the call moving by asking the caller good questions.]

4. [Every three minutes, call out for the groups to switch roles. Explain to students the following directions:
- Callers become listeners, listeners become tappers, tappers become callers.
  - The new tapper writes the caller's name on the top of his/her sheet.
  - The new caller uses the next idea on the "Phone Tap Calls" list as the basis of his/her call.]
5. [When everyone has had a turn as caller, students exchange their sheets to see how many checks they earned, and what suggestions the tappers made. Anyone with multiple checks is doing well.]

### III. Can't Fail E-mail (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Besides talking on the phone, how else do you communicate with friends?

[Let students answer; someone should say something like, "IM" and "e-mail" but if not, you suggest it.]

When you send an e-mail to a friend, do you use full sentences, correct spelling and proper grammar? [This should get a laugh, or a chorus of "No!"]

Give some examples of shortcuts you use. [Students give examples.]

Using shortcuts and abbreviations when you e-mail a friend is just fine. But when you e-mail an adult, or someone you don't know well, to get information about a job or a research paper, for example, you need to use a more formal and grammatically correct style.

2. [Display **Student Handbook page 33, Can't Fail E-mail** using an overhead projector and refer students to this page. Have a different student read aloud each e-mail. As a class, discuss the differences between the e-mail to a friend, and the e-mail to an adult. Point out what's important to remember when you communicate with adults via e-mail. Underline these tips on the overhead. Instruct the students to circle these tips on their handbook page.

If there are abbreviations or slang expressions in the e-mail to a friend that your students don't know, use that as a "reachable moment" to show them how an adult receiving an indecipherable e-mail might think and feel.]

### IV. Switch and Fix (15 minutes)

1. [Instruct the students to take out a pencil and piece of paper, and write a three- to five-sentence e-mail to a friend describing something they'd like to receive as a gift, such as a new CD, a puppy, a sports car, etc. (Give a sheet of paper to every student who does not have one.) The subject isn't important, as long as they write the e-mail to someone their age, from one friend to another, with abbreviations, slang, etc. (Note that students should use language appropriate for school.) Tell them to include an e-mail heading (who it's to, from, date, subject line) as if it were a real e-mail. (The e-mail to an adult on **Student Handbook page 33, Can't Fail E-mail** provides a model.)

Give the class six minutes to write, with a one-minute warning when it's time to wrap up.]

2. [On your signal, tell the students to switch pages, passing their page to the person on their right.]
3. [The students now rewrite the letter in front of them, fixing it so it's appropriate to send to an adult. Put a fake name (such as Mr. Rich) and a fake e-mail address (richrich@money.com) on the board for them to use. Give them eight minutes to complete the task, with a one-minute warning when it's time to wrap up.]
4. [On your signal, tell them to pass the page back to its original writer. Give everyone a minute to read the revisions their partners made. If there's time, ask students to read aloud, and praise or suggest appropriate revisions.]

## V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. [If time permits, quiz the class's knowledge of telephone and e-mail tips. Without looking at their handbook pages, students should recite tips discussed earlier in class. (They do not have to recite the tip word for word as long as they have covered the main idea.) Check off their responses on the appropriate student handbook pages and give hints if the students seem stuck.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** How you present yourself to adults makes a difference, whether it's in person, on the phone, or in an e-mail. If you follow the simple guidelines we discussed today, adults will be more impressed by you, more likely to listen to you, and more willing to help you get what you want. Review the handbook pages often to improve your communication skills. That's it for today! Thanks, and see you next time.

## DO NOW

### Communication and Networking 1: Phone and E-mail Etiquette

Directions: You will have three minutes to read the questions and write your response.

**Questions:**

1. List three rules for having a polite phone conversation with an adult.  
(e.g.: Don't eat, drink, or chew gum while speaking)

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2. Imagine you need to write an e-mail to an adult. How should this e-mail look different than an e-mail to a friend?

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## SCRIPT

[Note: Please read this in an unprofessional manner. Mumble, shout, chew gum loudly, speak too fast, eat, burp, slurp—whatever will make your students cringe when they imagine their parents listening. And feel free to improvise.]

### FACILITATOR

Yeah, um, it's me. I gotta tell ya, you know,  
about the thing. The school thing. The whachamacallit.  
Hold on —

(SHOUTING, OVER SHOULDER)

Whaddy want? I'm on the phone!

(BACK TO THE CALL)

So, um, where was I? Oh yeah, like, I teach that  
school thing, for your kid, what's her name, his  
name, whatever. It's about stuff ya gotta know,  
like how to do good, when ya yak on the phone.  
That's it.

(HANG UP)

## PHONE TAP CALLS

You are going to be hosting a party for all of your classmates. In order to ensure that your party will be a hit, you need to make the following phone calls. Follow the instructions for each call, and remember all of the good telephone skills tips, and you will be sure to host the party of the century.

### **Call # 1:**

You are trying to book a venue for your party. You heard that the catering hall close to school has exactly the right amount of space and the right kind of food for your party. When you call, there won't be anyone to pick up, so you will have to leave a message. Make sure the message you leave is clear and provides all of the important information about you and your party (your name/ number/ a good time to call/ type of party), so that someone can call you back.

### **Call #2:**

A day has passed, and there was a message from Mr. Paul on your answering machine. Return Mr. Paul's call at the catering hall, to find out if you can hold your party there. When he picks up, provide details about your event (how many/date/time). Ask if he can give you a special rate for such a large group, and find out how much it will cost. Leave proper information so he can call you back with the information.

### **Call #3:**

You've learned that Mr. Paul can supply you with all the food and drinks you'll need except for a cake decorated in the school colors. Call Betty's Bakery to find out what size cake you'll need for 40 people and how much it will cost. Find out what kinds of cake she can bake and colors of frosting you can order. Place an order, and leave your name and phone number so she can reach you if she has questions.

### **Call #4:**

It is almost party time and you want to make sure that your DJ has all of the information about the party that she needs. You need to make sure that the DJ is going to play the right music. You also need to tell her when to arrive, the address of the party, and how long you will need her to stay. Make sure you leave your number with her in case anything comes up between now and the day of the party.

Caller's name \_\_\_\_\_

## GOOD TELEPHONE SKILLS CHECKLIST

Directions: Write the caller's name at the top of the page. Check off each skill you observe the caller using. Record your comments at the bottom of this sheet.

- Know what you want to say before making the call.
- Speak clearly, in a pleasant tone of voice.
- Don't eat, drink, or chew gum while speaking.
- Identify yourself as soon as someone answers, and ask for the person with whom you'd like to speak. "Hello, this is Jane Doe. May I please speak with Mr. So-and-So?"
- If someone else answers first, introduce yourself again when the correct person comes on the line.
- State the reason for your call. "I'm a student at Irvington Middle School, practicing phone calls. Would you mind if I asked you a question about recycling?"
- Be respectful and polite at all times.
- Avoid slang, and use proper English. For example, say "Yes" instead of "yeah."
- Be a good listener, without interrupting.
- If the person will be calling you back, repeat your name, spell it, and leave your phone number (including the area code if the call isn't local).
- Thank the caller for speaking with you.
- Say goodbye, and give the person a chance to do the same before disconnecting.
- If you get an answering machine, leave a message that clearly states your name, why you are calling, when you are calling (date and time), and a number where you can be reached. Make sure you finish the message by saying "Thank you."

Comments:

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## CAN'T FAIL E-MAIL

### Example #1: E-mail to a friend

To: yobud@roadstosuccess.org  
From: student@roadstosuccess.org  
Date:  
Subject:

sup

wen riting an e-mail 2 an adult def be polite all da time...be sure dat ur sn is aight...fill da top out wit da rite info bout urself meaning da address date subject...make da lettr like a biz lettr usin good gramma spellin and punctuation...dont use smilies or type in all caps LIKE THIS...rmembr 2 give info bout how 2 reach u w/ur e-mail and ur name...g/l

g2g  
ur dawg

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### Example #2: E-mail to an adult

To: student@roadstosuccess.org  
From: facilitator@roadstosuccess.org  
Date: June 2, 2012  
Subject: Can't Fail E-mail

Dear Student,

When writing an e-mail to an adult, please be polite at all times. Make sure you have a respectable screen name. Fill in the header with the correct e-mail address, the date (if it's an option), and the subject (be brief but to the point). Construct your letter like a business letter, using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. Don't use emoticons, or type in all capitals (which indicates shouting). Remember to include information about how to reach you with a response (your e-mail address, and full real name). Good luck.

Thank you,  
Facilitator, Roads to Success