

Teaching Communication

Communication. In any career and industry, the ability to articulate thoughts clearly, listen actively, and adapt communication to different audiences is fundamental for team success, problem-solving, and career advancement. Employers consistently rank strong communication skills as essential for workplace success.

The attached flyer is designed for you to display in your classroom to help students define Communication and recognize how they are already using and developing it in their classroom and future industry. Please print this out and put it up!

Why Communication Matters in CTE

Our Career and Technical Education (CTE) students need to master communication to excel in their field. Fostering this durable skill ensures they can:

- **Collaborate effectively** on team projects and in group work.
- **Present their work** and technical ideas to diverse stakeholders (clients, supervisors, team members).
- **Give and receive constructive feedback** professionally and respectfully.
- **Navigate diverse teams** by adapting their style to different personalities and cultural backgrounds.
- **Resolve conflicts** and negotiate effectively in a workplace environment.
- **Use technology effectively** for professional digital communication (email, reports, presentations).

Teaching Communication in CTE Courses – Practical Ideas

Here are some specific, hands-on ways you can integrate and teach communication within your CTE programs:

- **"Pitch" Presentations:** Have students present a project plan, design, or business idea to a "client" (you, another teacher, or advisory board member). The goal is to articulate complex technical information in a clear, persuasive, and non-technical way.
 - *Example:* In a Welding class, have students "sell" a custom fabrication project, explaining the design choices and costs to a hypothetical customer.
- **Structured Technical Documentation:** Beyond just completing a task, require students to create clear, concise written instructions or user manuals for another student to follow. This emphasizes writing for a specific audience.
 - *Example:* In an IT/Computer Science class, students write a step-by-step troubleshooting guide for a common software or hardware issue.

- **Feedback Loops & Role-Playing:** Incorporate dedicated time for students to practice giving and receiving peer feedback on a project. You can use role-playing scenarios to practice professional conversations, such as asking a supervisor for a raise or managing a conflict with a teammate.
 - *Example:* In a Health Science class, students practice patient-provider communication, focusing on empathetic and clear explanations of care.
- **Utilize Industry Advisory Boards:** When industry partners visit, have them specifically comment on the communication skills demonstrated by students during their presentations or shop tours. Invite them to share real-world examples of communication failures or successes in their workplace.
- **Simulate "Communication Breakdown" Scenarios:** Introduce an intentional miscommunication in a team project (e.g., giving one team member slightly different project requirements). The students' task is to identify the communication failure and resolve the issue as a team.
 - *Example:* In an Automotive class, two team members could be given different repair instructions for the same vehicle, requiring them to use effective communication to realize the discrepancy and align on the correct procedure.
- **The Cross-Functional Team Conflict:** Two groups representing different departments (e.g., Engineering and Marketing) are given a project goal but with conflicting priorities or resource constraints. Students must meet to negotiate a resolution that satisfies the core needs of both teams.
 - *Example: Engineering & Marketing:* The Engineering team needs more time to fix a critical bug, but the Marketing team needs the product launched by an inflexible deadline. They must negotiate a compromise on scope and timeline.
- **Industry Speaker Interview Prep:** Before a guest speaker arrives, students research the speaker's background and company. They then practice formulating insightful, open-ended questions to ask the professional, moving beyond simple "yes/no" questions to elicit deeper industry knowledge.
 - *Example: Any Pathway:* Students formulate questions for a visiting CEO about career path challenges, the future of the industry, and what durable skills are most lacking in new hires.
- **Demonstration Speeches:** Students teach a fundamental technical skill to the class. The emphasis is on the clarity, sequence, and visual aids of the demonstration, and the ability to answer audience questions clearly and concisely.
 - *Example: Culinary Arts:* Demonstrate the proper technique for preparing a specific cut of meat or calibrating a thermometer, ensuring safety steps are clearly communicated.
- **The Safety Briefing Challenge:** Students are assigned a critical piece of safety equipment or procedure. They must deliver a motivational and professional safety briefing to their "team," using body language, vocal variation, and clear language to ensure compliance.
 - *Example: Health Science:* Deliver a pre-shift briefing on new PPE protocols or a patient confidentiality policy, emphasizing why it matters for the team.
- **"Pitch Your Plan" Presentation:** Students present a complex proposal—like a system upgrade or a major design change—to a decision-making audience (e.g., the Advisory Committee or the instructor as the "CEO"). The focus is on translating technical concepts into a business value proposition.
 - *Example: Computer Science:* Pitch the design and implementation of a new app or network security upgrade, focusing on its return on investment (ROI) and

impact on users.