



Social Skills Packet

Activities and Worksheets

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Social Skills

Communication Skills

Questionnaire

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Communication Skills Questionnaire

A motivated student becomes a successful learner. I like to ask my new students (or previous students at the start of a new school year) which skills are most important to them, and I also want to find out in which areas they believe they need help. This questionnaire lets students check which skills they'd like to work on in the following categories: conversational skills (e.g., maintaining and shifting eye contact, picking a good topic), practical skills (e.g., asking for help in a store, ordering in a restaurant), non-verbal (e.g., understanding others' personal space, reading facial expressions and body language), dating (e.g., asking someone out, choosing an activity), and conflicts (e.g., handling misunderstandings, sticking up for oneself). The questionnaire lets teachers, speech language pathologists, and therapists know which skills are important to individual students, and gives them insight into which skills their students or clients feel they need help with, at the same time increasing their students' or clients' self-awareness and providing them with information regarding possible skills on which to focus.

Name _____

Date _____

Communication Skills I'd Like To Work On

Put a check next to any skills you'd like to work on:

Conversational Skills

- ___ Starting up a conversation
- ___ Entering a conversation already in progress
- ___ Picking a good topic
- ___ Keeping a conversation going
- ___ Switching topics
- ___ Getting out of a conversation
- ___ Feeling comfortable during conversations
- ___ Maintaining and shifting eye contact during conversations
- ___ Being a good listener
- ___ Balancing taking turns
- ___ Not interrupting
- ___ Handling communication breakdowns

Other:

Practical Skills

- ___ Ordering fast food
- ___ Ordering in a restaurant
- ___ Asking for help in a store
- ___ Setting up a get-together with friends
- ___ Making a formal appointment by phone (e.g., doctor, bank)
- ___ Getting someone's attention
- ___ Leaving a formal message
- ___ Leaving an informal message
- ___ Being introduced / meeting someone
- ___ Making introductions

Other:



Non-Verbal

- ___ “Reading” body language and facial expressions
- ___ Recognizing sarcasm
- ___ Understanding and respecting others’ personal space
- ___ Shifting eye gaze during conversations
- ___ Shaking hands
- ___ Using tone of voice to accurately convey emotions and intentions

Other:

Dating

- ___ Approaching someone
- ___ Asking someone out
- ___ Choosing an activity
- ___ Conversation on a date
- ___ Figuring out if someone’s interested in me
- ___ Figuring out what contact is appropriate
- ___ Letting someone down easy
- ___ Handling rejection

Other:

Conflicts

- ___ Sticking up for myself
- ___ Disagreeing with a friend or sibling (a peer)
- ___ Disagreeing with a parent or teacher (an authority figure)
- ___ Handling it when someone’s mad at me
- ___ Handling it when I’ve made a mistake
- ___ Handling it when I’ve been misunderstood
- ___ Handling it when something’s too difficult

Other:





Social Skills

Being a Good Conversationalist

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Being a Good Conversationalist

Frankly, it's not just individuals on the autism spectrum that could use instruction on being better conversationalists. We all have neurotypical relatives, friends, neighbors, and coworkers who monopolize conversations, or interrupt frequently, or tell long-winded stories with too much detail. Unfortunately, there's usually no comfortable way to let those people in our lives know that they need to change their behaviors. I'm happy to have the chance to work on social niceties and conversation skills with my students. We discuss each aspect of *Being a Good Conversationalist* and practice in a number of ways, sometimes focusing on just one aspect at a time. See therapeutic notes for more details.

Name _____

Date _____

Being a Good Conversationalist

1) Listen more than talk

- % rule
- don't monopolize!
- exceptions to that rule:
informative turns, including narratives and instructions
special events, such as an award presentation or wedding dinner
venting turns

2) Spatial Inclusion

- circles and triangles
- eye contact

3) Conversational Input enjoyed by many people:

- humor
- emotions
- conflicts/struggles
- negative experiences in general
- descriptiveness
- surprises
- extremes
- clarity
- intonation and volume variety
- visuals

4) Ask questions!

- try to be genuinely curious, stop thinking of what you plan to say next
- ask follow-up questions
- open-ended questions are good, such as "how...?" and "why...?"

5) Avoid:

- interrupting
- offending
- insulting
- excluding



Therapeutic Notes: Being a Good Conversationalist

1) Listen more than talk — *Have you ever heard the story of the guy on a first date that spent most of the dinner just listening? Afterward his date told friends what an excellent conversationalist he was. Most people like to talk about themselves and appreciate others who let them do that.*

- % rule — *I explain to my students that if two people are in a conversation then each should be speaking about 50% of the time, with three people each should be speaking about 33% of the time, and so on.*
- don't monopolize! — *I created an activity that keeps track of everyone's conversational turns. During a conversation, students are given a question chip or a comment chip for each turn they take, so that at the end of the conversation students have tangible evidence of how much they talked (longer turns get more chips) compared to others, and also evidence of their own balance of comments vs. questions.*

- exceptions to that rule:

informative turns, including narratives and instructions — *This applies to situations such as when one person is telling an involved story, or needs to give extensive instructions.*

special events, such as an award presentation or wedding dinner — *Sometimes people give speeches.*

venting turns — *When people are going through difficult experiences they may need to vent, while the others mainly listen and give emotional support.*

2) Spatial Inclusion

- circles and triangles — *I've taken my students around our school to "hang out" briefly in different spots, like on the stairs, in offices, in the gym, sometimes sitting and sometimes standing, with the goal of arranging ourselves in an appropriate shape for a conversation (triangular for three people, circular for four or more).*
- eye contact — *Everyone should be able to see everyone else's eyes.*

3) Conversational Input enjoyed by many people:

- humor — *Finding out you have the same sense of humor as someone else is a good way to connect.*
- emotions — *A great way to develop intimacy.*
- conflicts/struggles — *People can often relate to similar hardships.*



- negative experiences in general — *It's human nature. I give my students this example: "Which is more interesting? 'Yesterday I went on a roller coaster and it was so much fun I couldn't stop smiling' or 'yesterday I went on a roller coaster and felt so sick when I got off that I threw up on my little brother's sneakers.' "*
- descriptiveness — *Helps your listeners imagine your stories' events.*
- surprises — *People love plot twists.*
- extremes — *Best/worst, favorite/least favorite, out-of-the-ordinary details.*
- clarity — *It's important to give orienting details at the start of narratives.*
- intonation and volume variety — *Keeps your listeners engaged.*
- visuals — *Visuals are often helpful for clarity and interest, and we all know students like to show pictures or videos on their phones.*

4) Ask questions! — *Check out Celeste Headlee's TED Talk "10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation". Honestly, I believe being genuinely curious about your communicative partner is the number one way to be a good conversationalist. She talks about how the skills that make someone a good interviewer also make someone good at conversations. That's why I have my students interview staff members or other students for conversation practice. But, I also teach them to balance questions and comments so a conversation doesn't turn into an interrogation.*

- try to be genuinely curious, stop thinking of what you plan to say next
- ask follow-up questions — *I believe this is key to making the other person feel truly listened to!*
- open-ended questions are good, such as "how...?" and "why...?"

5) Avoid:

- interrupting — *Keep the focus on listening.*
- offending — *Refer to the perspective-taking activity Tact.*
- insulting — *Ditto.*
- excluding — *Avoid excluding spatially or through topic choice.*





Social Skills

Choosing Conversation Topics

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Choosing Conversation Topics

When I ask my students which social skills they would like to work on, one of the skills they most frequently mention is choosing topics for conversation. I tell them a good topic should have three characteristics: the conversation participants should find it interesting; they should have it in common, meaning each participant can have something to say about it; and it should be appropriate, meaning non-offensive to everyone in the conversation. An exception to the rule of commonality is when one of the participants is telling a story or informing the others about a topic. There are also exceptions to the rule of appropriateness (also known as “don’t discuss sex, politics, or religion”), depending on with whom you’re talking. For example, I tell my students it can be appropriate to discuss sex with a close family member, friend, or counselor. I use the handout as a checklist. During group sessions, every student and I fill out our own handout. As we go through each topic together, we place a check if we find the topic interesting, if we know something about it and would have something to say about it, and if it’s appropriate for a discussion with our specific group. We place X’s if not. Then we highlight the topics that received checks across the board on everyone’s handout. Those are deemed the good topics, which we’ll then use for conversation. I point out to my students that “good topics” vary depending on who is in a conversation. For example, I don’t find sports interesting, but a different conversation may take place where everyone is interested in sports.

Name _____

Date _____

Choosing Conversation Topics

	Interesting	Common	Appropriate
School			
Work			
Sports			
Fashion			
Weather			
Religion			
Movies			
Sex			
TV shows			
Technology			
Art			
Home design			
Money			
Cars			
Politics			
Holidays			
Drugs			
Other:			





Conversation Skills

Elaboration

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Conversational Elaboration

Helpful to individuals on the autism spectrum and to anyone who wants to improve their conversational skills, this handout explains the importance of elaborating when answering a question and how elaborated answers keep a conversation flowing. Following a written discussion, several answers are provided to the same question and are rated in terms of their elaboration. This handout also serves as a good jumping off point for conversational practice.

Name _____

Date _____

Conversational Elaboration

Your listener needs information.

Your listener wants to fully understand and to hear interesting details.

In conversation, most people want to engage; they want to hear your ideas and understand what you are telling them. They want to know what your opinions are. They want to get to know you. They want the conversation to flow easily. They want to hear your stories, understand your explanations, and consider your point of view.

Elaborate!

Below are ratings on elaboration on a scale from 1–10 (10 is best).

You and your friend are hanging out during lunch and he asks:

“Tell me how your sister’s wedding was”

- 1 — “fine”
- 2 — “fine thanks”
- 3 — “it was pretty good”
- 4 — “it was alright I guess, I liked it”
- 5 — “it was alright, but some parts were boring”
- 6 — “it was alright, but the ceremony was really boring”
- 7 — “the ceremony was boring, but they played good music at the reception”
- 8 — “Oh my god, I practically fell asleep during the ceremony, but I liked the music they played at the reception”
- 9 — “Oh my god, I practically fell asleep during the ceremony, but I liked the music they played at the reception so I had fun dancing. We stayed until almost 2 in the morning!”
- 10 — “I practically fell asleep during the ceremony, it was so long and boring. They played a lot of current songs at the reception, so it was fun dancing and we stayed until almost 2 in the morning! The best part, though, was the food: I ate a 2 pound lobster that was dripping in butter and the wedding cake was my favorite.”

Take a look at which responses above are conversation blockers, and which are conversation extenders by leading easily to questions or comments. For example, in response to the comments in #9, a listener might ask what made the ceremony so boring or what kind of music they played at the reception, or might comment on how late you stayed.



Conversation Skills

**Narratives
Set the Scene**

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Narratives: Set the Scene

Telling stories (narratives) is a big part of conversations, whether telling about a recent trip, recounting an interesting incident observed at school, or describing a weekend event. Students who struggle with organization, perspective taking, or memory issues are often poor storytellers. They neglect to provide necessary details and leave their listeners disoriented. This straightforward worksheet provides educators and speech language pathologists with an easy way to teach students to provide orienting details when starting a simple, conversational story. Students receive visual and kinesthetic prompts to practice this skill. You will find that your students very quickly internalize the simple structure that *Narratives: Set the Scene* provides, establish a mental map, and generalize the skill of “setting the scene” for their stories into their everyday conversations!

Name _____

Date _____

SET THE SCENE!

When you tell a story (something that happened over the weekend, an incident you saw on the news, a plot line in a television episode) your listener needs to be able to imagine (often by visualizing) the context before you “get into” the story.

Start each of the stories below by giving the following information:

_____ **WHEN**

_____ **WHO’S THERE**

_____ **WHERE IS IT TAKING PLACE**

_____ **WHAT ARE PARTICIPANTS DOING at the start**

1. Tell about something that happened over the past weekend.
2. Tell about something you did on a vacation.
3. Tell a story about being sick.
4. Tell a favorite family story.
5. Tell about an episode of your favorite TV show.
6. Tell about a birthday celebration.
7. Tell about an interesting interaction you witnessed at school.
8. Tell about something that happened in your neighborhood.
9. Tell about a current event.
10. Tell something funny that happened to you or a family member.
11. Tell about something that happened during your childhood.
12. Tell about a recent holiday event.



Therapeutic Notes – Narratives: Set the Scene

Function of this worksheet and activity

Narratives: Set the Scene is a great tool for teaching individuals with attention deficit disorders, with any impairment of executive skills functioning, or on the autism spectrum how to start a story in an organized, comprehensive, and communicative partner-friendly manner.

So many of my students with A.S.D. or attention deficit disorders have trouble answering simple requests for information, such as “tell me about your summer” or “tell me about your internship experience.” Often, they will start a story without providing any orienting information, such as where they were, who was with them, or when the event took place. Individuals who struggle with theory of mind have a hard time putting themselves in others’ shoes. So when they tell about something that happened to them, they know what happened, and they struggle to understand and keep in mind just what their listener doesn’t already know, and hence needs to know. I created *Narratives: Set the Scene* to target this deficit, and have found that it provides a simple and tangible way for students to keep in mind what information they need to provide to listeners at the start of a verbal narrative and to practice providing that information.

Suggested procedure

After reading the short introduction to students and further discussing the importance of providing listeners with orienting details at the beginning of stories, I like to give an example. I start a story without providing any establishing elements: “Santa and one of the elves got into a fight”, and tell my students that I left out important information. Then I restart my story, using a pencil to check off each of the four orienting details: (when) “Last December, (who’s there) my brother and I, (where is it taking place) were at the Roosevelt Field Mall, (what are participants doing at the start) doing a little holiday shopping when we saw children lined up to sit on Santa’s lap. All of a sudden, Santa and one of the elves got into a fight.” My students and I then consider how the story is now clear and makes sense.

I erase my check marks and now it’s my students’ turn. I have them choose one of the requests for information (numbered 1-12). When they’re ready I have them start their story and as they provide each orienting detail I check it off. If they need a visual prompt, either to get started or because they have skipped a detail, a simple point to one of the details listed always suffices. Students choose another numbered request for information and continue with the task, relying on fewer and fewer prompts and taking over the responsibility of checking, until they are swiftly able to start their stories with all four orienting details without any kinesthetic or visual cues. I have found that many of my students quickly begin to generalize the skill of “setting the scene” for their narratives into their everyday conversations outside of our speech sessions!



Social Skills

Interviewing Others

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Interviewing Others

As I noted in *Being a Good Conversationalist*, I believe being genuinely interested in finding out about another person is key to being good at conversations. Toward that end, I often have my students interview staff members, high school seniors, and/or family members to work on several conversational skills, especially the ability to follow the interviewee's statements with comments and follow-up questions. I teach my students that this ability serves two important functions: extending conversations and making their communicative partners feel truly listened to. Following are various forms to use for interviews, along with notes on therapeutic intervention.

Name _____

Date _____

Staff Interview Questions

What is your position at (name of school)?

How long have you been at (name of school)?

How many years have you been a (profession)?

What inspired you to become a (profession)?

What tasks and responsibilities do you have here?

Do you find your job interesting?

Is your job stressful?

(for teachers) What subjects do you teach?

(for teachers) Do you enjoy teaching one subject more than others?

Have you worked with age groups other than (current age group)?

How do you handle conflicts between students?

How do you help students when they become upset or sad?

What is your favorite thing about your job?

What is the most difficult part of your job?

How do you feel about the current education system?

What other profession would you have liked to try?

Did you grow up in (current state/region)?

Do you have any pets?

What do you like to do in your free time?

Other questions:



Name _____

Date _____

High School Senior Interview Questions

How long have you attended (name of school)?

What do you like about (name of school)?

What would you change about (name of school) if you could?

If you were in charge, what changes might you make to the education system?

What has been your favorite class at (name of school)?

What has been your least favorite class?

Who is your favorite teacher?

What is your favorite part of the school day?

Do you have a job outside of school?

Do you know what profession you'd like to go into?

Do you know where you will be and what you will be doing next year?

Did you grow up in (current state/region)?

When you can live on your own, where would you choose to live?

What are your hobbies?

What do you like to do for fun?

Do you have any pets?

Who do you live with?

Would you describe yourself as an introvert or extrovert?

What do you most hope to achieve in life?

Other questions:



Post-Interview Evaluation

Thank you for being interviewed and for taking the time to fill out this evaluation!

Your name _____

Student's name _____

Date of interview _____

Please score the following: 3 = great job

2 = pretty good

1 = could use improvement

N/A = didn't notice or not applicable

Did the student ...

arrive on time? ____

make you feel comfortable? ____

use appropriate eye contact? ____

speak using an appropriate rate and volume? ____

use any humor? ____

make the questions clear? ____

clarify any misunderstandings effectively? ____

show interest through facial expression? ____

show interest through body posture? ____

follow up your answers with comments? ____

follow up your answers with other questions? ____

respond during your answers with interjections (e.g., "uh huh", "wow", "okay")? ____

thank you at the end? ____

Comments:



Name _____

Date _____

Family Member Interview

1) Pick 6 – 8 of the following questions to video interview a family member:

- What's your earliest memory?
- Who's your role model?
- You have unlimited money. Where would you go for a two-week vacation?
- If you could tame and live with one wild animal, which would you choose?
- Where's your favorite place to hang out at home?
- Show your favorite outfit and tell why it's your favorite.
- Would you rather be an only child or one of ten?
- Would you rather live somewhere other than (current place)?
- What was your favorite age?
- What's your fantasy job?

2) Come up with two questions of your own to ask:

- Your pick:
- Your pick:

3) Decide in what order you want to ask the questions.

Most Important:

- Follow up your family member's answers with comments or more questions.
- "Why" questions are often good follow-up questions.
- Be curious! If you're genuinely curious your follow-up questions will come more naturally.



Name _____

Date _____

Post-Interview of Family Member Questionnaire

1. Family member interviewed:

- Relation to you?
- Name?
- Age? (if this relative doesn't mind providing)
- Why did you choose this relative?

2. What was the most interesting or surprising thing you found out about your relative?

3. How do you think this relative felt during the interview? Circle the number:

self-conscious	not at all	1	2	3	4 very
bored		1	2	3	4
annoyed		1	2	3	4
happy to have the attention		1	2	3	4

4. Come up with a question you would genuinely like to ask the following:

- the same person you interviewed
- your great-great-grandfather
- your 30-year-old self
- your 5-year-old self
- your celebrity crush
- the current president
- your dog/cat/hamster/snake/ferret/fish
- the bird that sings outside your window
- me



Therapeutic Notes: Interviewing Others

I will often have my students interview a staff member before or instead of interviewing a high school senior only because I can count on my coworkers to be non-judgmental and usually less intimidating. The procedure for interviewing staff members and high school seniors is the same. We start by discussing what makes someone a good conversationalist. I explain the connection between being good at interviewing someone and being good at conversing, in part because I always like my students to know why I assign the tasks I do. We go over the expectations listed on the *Post-Interview Evaluation*, and I let them know that the staff member or senior will be filling this form out after the interview. We role-play approaching the staff member or senior to request an interview and set up a time. I help my students choose which questions they would like to ask, usually ten to twelve, including one or two of their own. In preparation for staff member interviews, I point out that the last four questions listed are good examples of personal questions that are not inappropriately personal. I created the *Family Member Interview* and *Post-Interview of Family Member Questionnaire* during the pandemic when I was conducting all my sessions over Zoom, but of course this task is still practical now that students are back to in-person learning. I emphasize the importance of being curious. Once my students have chosen which questions to ask a staff member, senior, or family member, I have them practice first by asking me the questions, focusing on the skill of following up my answers with comments or additional questions.





Conversation Skills

Entering Conversations

Available in the format below:



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Entering Conversations

This handout provides an outline of the behaviors required to enter an ongoing conversation, including observation, gaining physical proximity, identifying topics, timing, commenting/questioning, determination of acceptance, and exit strategies. The handout can be used for discussion and/or role-play to help individuals on the autism spectrum improve their conversational skills, expand their knowledge of social dynamics, and increase their confidence to initiate interactions.

Name _____

Date _____

Entering Conversations

1) Watch and Listen

- don't stare, just glance occasionally
- can use phone or book as a prop

Reasons to listen in:

- to find out the topic
- to decide if the people may be open to you joining them

2) Physically move a little closer

3) Wait for a pause (don't wait for a "perfect" pause)

4) Make a comment or ask a question on topic

- can do with physical commitment (moving into their space)
- can do without physical commitment

5) Determine if you are being accepted

Signs of acceptance:

- eye contact
- smiling
- talking to you
- physically turning toward you
- opening the "circle"

Note: Don't take it personally if you are not accepted!

This happens approximately 50% of the time for everyone

6) Exit if not accepted

- first, start to look away
- next, start to turn away
- last, walk away, possibly with a casual exit statement



Therapeutic Notes: Entering Conversations

You can find a video demonstrating these steps to enter a conversation on wrongplanet.net “How to Join a Social Circle & Make Friends in a Group”. As is demonstrated in the video, today’s technology really helps individuals on the autism spectrum (as well as all of us!) avoid looking awkward when alone and following step one’s eavesdropping recommendation; it is so common to see people looking at their phones that no one thinks twice. I do recommend to my students that when they follow step four to actually enter the conversation verbally, they might want to start with an apologetic comment such as, “sorry, but I couldn’t help overhearing...”

I also make sure I always discuss handling rejection with my students. I discuss a version of the stereotypical breakup line “it’s not you, it’s me”, namely, “it’s not you, it’s them” so try not to take it personally (unless you should, of course). I feel it can also help, if you believe it would be appropriate in the context you are working with your students, to tell them of your own experiences of rejection. That way they can see that rejection is universal; it doesn’t only happen to people with diagnosed social pragmatic disorders, and they can hopefully learn they are not alone. Harlan Cohen, the author of the wonderful instructional book *The Naked Roommate*, describes the Universal Rejection Truths in his TED Talk “Getting Comfortable with the Uncomfortable”. He explains how not everyone will like you, purchase your products or services, or want to spend time with you, but some people will. Back to the main message: if you are rejected don’t take it personally. So many of our students have suffered rejection and been bullied. We all do our best to build up their self-esteem, and in doing so, increase the likelihood that they will be more willing to “put themselves out there” to take a social chance.



Social Skills

Post-Conversation Questionnaire

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Post-Conversation Questionnaire

I'm always engaging my students in conversations, both natural and "naturalistic". The most natural take place while we walk to my office, or in my office at the start of our sessions. But as every speech language pathologist knows, when given the goal of helping students improve their conversation skills, our conversations during our sessions must often be "naturalistic", meaning semi-artificial. I might target topic shifting, or turn taking, or using a balance of questions and comments, or interpreting non-verbal communication. Following some conversations, I like to have my students fill out this questionnaire. It addresses being curious about your conversational partner, identifying impressions given, and analyzing non-verbal behaviors. For many students it can help to take a look at the questions before the conversation, so they can know what to look out for while conversing. I always task them with paying close attention to only one person during these conversations.

Name _____

Date _____

Post-Conversation Questionnaire

Directions: For each question fill in the name of the person with whom you conversed.

What was the most unexpected thing you found out about _____?

What impression of _____ did the conversation give you?
(name three adjectives)

1.

2.

3.

From non-verbal clues (facial expression, body language, tone of voice, etc.), on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being the least and 10 the most, _____ appeared:

_____ relaxed

_____ interested in you

_____ engaging (made you feel connected)

What else would you want to know about _____ that you didn't get a chance to ask?

What impressions of you do you hope the conversation gave _____?
(name two adjectives)

1.

2.

Did you enjoy the conversation? Why or why not?





Social Skills

Tone of Voice

Available in the format below:



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Tone of Voice

Often, when people think of non-verbal communication they think of facial expressions and body language, but don't think of tone of voice. We use tone of voice to express and to interpret emotions and intentions. How you say something can be as important as the words you use. Of course, this is a major reason why the intended message in texts and emails can be misinterpreted. If you want to see a perfect (and hysterical) example of this, check out the YouTube video "Key & Peele: Text Message Confusion". If you'd like to share it with your students, you might want to choose the censored version! When individuals on the autism spectrum struggle with interpreting or effectively using tone of voice it can, unfortunately, be a difficult skill to teach. I've designed an activity that targets both interpretation and use of tone of voice. At the very least, *Tone of Voice* can serve as an evaluation tool. At my school we've had students who came across as rude or whiny, but when we discovered that their tone of voice did not match their intentions we better understood how to respond.

Name _____

Date _____

Tone of Voice

Changing our tone of voice is another way we communicate non-verbally.

How we say something can be as important as what we say.

For example saying, "Thanks so much for the beautiful card!" in a sarcastic tone of voice means you're not thankful and you didn't think the card was beautiful.

Here are some emotions we can express through our tone of voice:

happiness	frustration	despair
anger	elation	annoyance
sadness	disgust	surprise
fear	pride	relief
anxiety	embarrassment	jealousy
boredom	confusion	suspicion
disappointment	sarcasm	shock

Directions: Take turns choosing three of the emotions listed above. Write them down on a piece of paper, numbered 1–3, but don't let anyone else see them. Now record yourself saying one of the sentences below using a different tone of voice each time to convey your chosen three emotions. Say your chosen sentence exactly as written below; do not add any words. Then play the audio recording for others, and see if they can guess which emotions you tried to convey. They may need to hear each one more than once.

Sentences to record:

I saw my ex, Juan, at Sara's party last night.

My mom said I cannot go camping with you this weekend.

Did you see Ty when you were at the mall?

Isabelle showed up this morning at my door.

I got the tickets for the show, and they cost \$36 each.

I don't know if you met my girlfriend Riley.

My brother ended up winning the spelling bee at his school.

You need to finish your art project before I come over on Wednesday.



Social Skills

Kinesics

Interest vs. Disinterest

Available in the format below:



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Kinesics: Interest vs. Disinterest

Individuals on the autism spectrum typically have difficulty noticing and interpreting non-verbal cues, and consequently often try to engage in conversations past their communicative partners' interest or time limits. This activity directly works on the skills of observation and interpretation. Students are given a checklist of behaviors of interest and disinterest, including open body posture, varied intonation, flat affect, and levels of eye contact, and are tasked with observing and tallying these behaviors, thereby making kinesics tangible and helping them determine whether or not to continue conversations and interactions. This material includes comprehensive therapeutic notes and directions, providing extensive suggestions on how to best conduct activities including improving generalization to real life social interactions.

Name _____

Date _____

Signs of Interest/Disinterest Checklist

Name of communicative partner observed _____

Relationship to communication initiator _____

Context/Setting _____

Signs of Interest		Signs of Disinterest
_____ maintains eye contact		_____ fleeting or no eye contact
_____ face and body turned toward		_____ face and body turned away
_____ open posture		_____ closed posture
_____ varied facial expressions		_____ flat affect
_____ frequent smiles and/or nods		_____ infrequent or no smiles or nods
_____ varied intonation		_____ monotone voice
_____ asks questions/makes comments		_____ few or no questions/comments
_____ often interjects ("uh-huh", "okay")		_____ infrequently or never interjects
_____ isn't doing anything else (gives conversation full attention)		_____ engaging in other actions (looks at papers, checks watch)

Do you think _____ was interested in conversing?

What did you observe that makes you think that? _____

If you think he/she was not interested, what reason(s) may he/she have had for not wanting to converse at that time? _____



Therapeutic Intervention

Kinesics: Interest vs. Disinterest

Notes: This activity gives students practice at observing and identifying signs of interest and disinterest, which will consequently improve their ability to determine how long to engage in conversations and interactions. Using a checklist for signs of interest and disinterest, students are tasked with observing natural conversations and interactions. The checklist requires students to pay attention to specific signs, thereby making social cues more concrete, tangible, and quantifiable. The checklist further makes clear the connection between those social cues and determination of another person's desire to engage or continue in a conversation or interaction.

Directions: Prior to use, therapists should review checklist terms, such as “open posture” and “flat affect” with students. This activity can then be employed in different ways. I typically start by having my students observe me interacting with fellow staff members. I give them a clipboard for the checklist sheet and they follow me to different coworkers' offices, where I start up and engage in conversations with a coworker while my students observe the conversation and check off the coworker's behaviors. Afterwards, we discuss their observations and resulting determination of the coworker's interest in conversing. I usually prep my coworkers ahead of time for several reasons. First, I want to make sure they will be available at certain times. Second, I often ask some of my coworkers to pretend they don't want to talk with me. Most of my coworkers are extremely kind and polite; hence without asking them ahead of time to act like they don't want to engage, my students would never get the chance to observe signs of disinterest. (Note: this tactic doesn't work well with coworkers who are bad actors!) Third, it helps to prep coworkers ahead of time so they don't wonder why my students are observing them while checking off behaviors on a clip-boarded sheet. I like to utilize this activity in this way so that students can focus all their attention on observing social cues, rather than having to observe and check off signs while conversing themselves. Once students become more adept and quicker at observing signs of interest and disinterest, they can work at paying attention to those signs during their own conversations. The checklist can also be utilized when observing conversations occurring in natural settings, or on reality TV shows, or on YouTube videos. It can help to turn off the volume so students can really focus on the non-verbal social cues. Lastly, when teaching students how to put into practice their skill at determining interest and disinterest, it's important to provide instruction on ways to end interactions smoothly, such as by using a closing comment like “you look busy—we'll catch up later”.





Social Skills

Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication Homework

Available in the format below:



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Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication Homework

Individuals on the autism spectrum are typically not adept at interpreting non-verbal communication. This is partly due to the fact that they usually do not observe others' behaviors nearly as often or as intently as neurotypical individuals do. That's why I give my students the homework task of observing others and interpreting non-verbal behaviors. I teach my students that "non-verbal communication" includes facial expression, body language, and tone of voice, and we work on interpretation in a number of ways before I give them the homework assignment. We may practice identifying non-verbal signs of various emotions in videos (such as clips of sitcoms, dramas, or reality TV) with the sound turned off. We use the activity *Tone of Voice* to work on using and interpreting tone of voice. We may use *Kinesics: Interest vs. Disinterest* to learn how non-verbal behaviors can indicate interest or a lack of interest. Notably, while the "Looking Out for Others' Feelings Homework" in *Developing Empathy* tasks students with guessing the perspectives of others mainly from context, *Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication Homework* tasks students with interpreting others' perspectives from non-verbal behaviors. The last question of this homework task is significant because while it's important to start observing others more regularly (which I hope the assignment encourages) and to accurately identify how another person is feeling, it's equally important to respond in a helpful manner to another's feelings.

Name _____

Due Date _____

Interpreting Non-Verbal Communication Homework

Where?

When?

What was the situation? (examples: eating dinner with your parents, answering questions during global history class, waiting in line for popcorn at a movie theater)

Whose non-verbal behaviors did you observe?

Describe that person's non-verbal behaviors (may include eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, actions):

By interpreting those non-verbal behaviors you believe that person felt:
(state emotions)

... and thought:

Did you do anything in response to your interpretation?

Examples:

- tried to build up someone's confidence who appeared nervous
- attempted to calm someone who appeared stressed
- asked someone who appeared angry if everything was okay





Social Skills

Impressions and Altruism

Available in the format below:



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Impressions and Altruism

I speak to my students often about altruism. I give them two reasons they should be altruistic: first, being kind to people and animals is the right thing to do, and second, it's in their self-interest. I tell them they will benefit from being kind. It will give others a good impression of them, which can lead to friendships, romantic relationships, comfortable interactions with acquaintances and strangers, and professional connections and promotions. The *Impressions and Altruism* activity also considers the other person's feelings in various situations. Given five straightforward social interactions, students take turns rolling a die to find out with whom they are interacting. They then answer five questions involving what they can say or do so that both they and the other person in the interaction can benefit. Note that in some situations what can benefit the other person is of less importance, such as when interacting with a job interviewer or a doctor.

Name _____

Date _____

Impressions and Altruism

Directions: For each of the following scenarios, roll a die to determine who is in the situation with you. Then answer each of the following questions:

- How do you want the other person to feel? (name feelings)
- What do you want the other person to have? (name nouns or verbs)
- What impression do you want to give? (name adjectives)
- What do you want from the other person? (name nouns or verbs)
- What can you say or do to achieve the above?

After you aced your algebra exam, you're speaking with:

- 1 — your friend who struggles with math
- 2 — your algebra teacher
- 3 — your dad who's an accountant
- 4 — your tutor
- 5 — your mom who won't let you use your phone past 9 p.m.
- 6 — a job interviewer for a cashier job

You are asked, "Tell me about yourself" by:

- 1 — your grandma
- 2 — a job interviewer
- 3 — your long-lost identical twin
- 4 — your doctor
- 5 — your date during the first time you're going out
- 6 — your date's scary-looking dad



You have a really bad sunburn and are speaking with:

- 1 — a dermatologist at your appointment
- 2 — a burn victim in the dermatologist's waiting room
- 3 — your mom who told you to use sunscreen but you didn't
- 4 — your friend who had talked you into using olive oil to get a better tan
- 5 — your grandma who keeps trying to hug you
- 6 — a new neighbor who offers you a homemade salve

You are asked, "What do you hope you get for your birthday?" by:

- 1 — your mom
- 2 — your teacher
- 3 — your friend who's broke
- 4 — your grandma who lives in a senior residence
- 5 — your ten-year-old brother
- 6 — your divorced dad's new boyfriend

You caused a minor car accident and are speaking with:

- 1 — your mom when you get home
- 2 — your dad in the passenger seat
- 3 — a police officer that arrived on the scene
- 4 — the person driving the other car
- 5 — the paramedic tending to your broken arm
- 6 — your teenaged child in the future





Social Skills

Reader Presupposition

Complaint Letters

Available in the format below:



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Reader Presupposition: Complaint Letters

This activity is unlike any I've found available for perspective taking and is one of my very favorites! It addresses the intricacies of writing while keeping your reader in mind, and the all-important skill of modifying your wording to give another person a targeted impression of you, all while working on a practical high-level life skill. It also combines writing skills and social skills. It begins with an actual complaint letter email requesting monetary compensation, extensive therapy notes on how to conduct the activity (including sentence by sentence interpretation of the effectiveness of the sample complaint letter's wording), and novel situations from which students must write their own complaint letters. When writing their complaint letters, students are tasked with choosing both semantic content and wording that will give their readers two targeted impressions of them: honest and reasonable. I have watched many of my students notably improve their perspective taking skills to a more sophisticated level from this activity. (Plus teenagers love being given not only permission, but also the expectation, to complain!)

Name _____

Date _____

Sample Letter

To Whom It May Concern,

I stayed at the Rolling Thunder Inn South in Boise, Idaho last week, from April 16–21. My brother and sister-in-law stayed in the room next to mine for the same five nights. My bill may be under my brother's name: William Stevens. When we checked in Sunday night, April 16, we were quoted a price of \$79.99. All three of us remember that quote. I specifically remember thinking, "okay, my total will be \$400 for the five nights". The morning we checked out, our bills reflected the price of \$89.99 per night. We brought this discrepancy to the attention of the hotel's staff, but were told that since we had signed a paper the night we arrived that had the \$89.99 price on it, we were responsible for that price.

I am asking that we receive a refund for the difference between our quoted price and the price we were charged for two reasons. First, although I understand that a signature is legally binding, I would like you to consider that we arrived at the hotel close to midnight after driving for fourteen hours, and were extremely motivated to finish the check-in process quickly since we were all exhausted, and did not notice the small printed price on the form we signed. And, it was your staff's mistake to print a different price on that form than the price they quoted to us seconds earlier. Second, my brother, sister-in-law, and I have all stayed at your hotel previously. My brother's daughter (my niece) lives two miles from your hotel, and so we planned to continue staying at your hotel every time we visit her in Boise. If we do not receive a refund of \$50 each (one refund for me and one for my brother and sister-in-law) we will not stay at your hotel again. Your hotel will essentially lose hundreds or thousands of dollars over time if you choose not to honor the price you quoted us the night we arrived.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Lisa Thompkins



Therapeutic Notes

Reader Presupposition: Complaint Letters

I use this activity to work on listener/reader presupposition. In earlier therapy sessions, I've discussed with my students the importance of always considering your communicative partner's perspective and adjusting your words and behaviors accordingly for two reasons. I explain that it's important to be altruistic and be kind to others, and it's also important to look out for yourself by giving others the best possible impression of you. This activity focuses on the latter.

I start this activity off by telling my students that this is an actual complaint email I sent (I've used pseudonyms here). I explain that whenever we speak or write to someone, we need to consider how our words affect them, and in cases where we are making a request we need to particularly consider how everything we say gives the other person an impression of us. In this situation, where I am requesting compensation, there are two impressions of myself I want to give: **honest** and **reasonable**.

To Whom It May Concern, (I explain to my students that since the Rolling Thunder Inn is a hotel chain, I looked up an email address on their website for customer service. Also "To Whom It May Concern" is the appropriate opening to use when you don't know the name of the person you are addressing.)

I stayed at the Rolling Thunder Inn South in Boise, Idaho last week, from April 16–21. My brother and sister-in-law stayed in the room next to mine for the same five nights. My bill may be under my brother's name: William Stevens. (I explain that I provide these specific pieces of information because the first thing the person who receives this email will do is check Rolling Thunder Inn's records to verify my stay there.) When we checked in Sunday night, April 16, we were quoted a price of \$79.99. All three of us remember that quote. I specifically remember thinking, "okay, my total will be \$400 for the five nights". (The previous two sentences help make me seem **honest**; by discovering these details about my thought process, the reader can now relate to my story.) The morning we checked out, our bills reflected the price of \$89.99 per night. We brought this discrepancy (I make sure my students know this word and see how it makes note of the staff's mistake) to the attention of the hotel's staff, but were told that since we had signed a paper the night we arrived that had the \$89.99 price on it, we were responsible for that price. (I explain that the first paragraph should give all the background information, and must be clear while providing specific information.)



I am asking that we receive a refund for the difference between our quoted price and the price we were charged for two reasons. *(I emphasize that the second paragraph begins with my request.)* First, although I understand that a signature is legally binding, (I ask my students why they think I provided evidence here against my position. We connect this technique to writing a persuasive essay where you choose to mention an argument your opposition would propose and then dispute it. But, much more importantly, I explain that admitting evidence against my position makes me come across as **reasonable**.) I would like you to consider that we arrived at the hotel close to midnight after driving for fourteen hours, and were extremely motivated to finish the check-in process quickly since we were all exhausted, and did not notice the small printed price on the form we signed. *(I tell my students that here is where I try the “pity approach”, and I often read the preceding lines in a pitiful tone for their amusement. I also point out that I made sure to mention the small size of the printed price.)* And, it was your staff’s mistake to print a different price on that form than the price they quoted to us seconds earlier. *(I note that I made sure to point out the error the hotel staff made.)* Second, my brother, sister-in-law, and I have all stayed at your hotel previously. My brother’s daughter (my niece) lives two miles from your hotel, and so we planned to continue staying at your hotel every time we visit her in Boise. If we do not receive a refund of \$50 each (one refund for me and one for my brother and sister-in-law) we will not stay at your hotel again. Your hotel will essentially lose hundreds or thousands of dollars over time if you choose not to honor the price you quoted us the night we arrived. *(I explain to my students that here is where I threaten the hotel chain, and that it’s okay to make this type of threat, that usually a monetary threat is the type of threat a company will respond to, and that it’s important to word it politely. I also discuss that my use of the word “honor” is a psychological strategy that could make the receiver of this email feel dishonorable if he or she doesn’t grant me the refund.)*

Thank you for your consideration of my request. *(Again, I emphasize the importance of being polite: because it’s good to be kind to others [altruism], and because it makes me come across as **reasonable** which would make the email’s receiver more likely to give me a refund [self-interest]).*

Sincerely,

Lisa Thompkins



When we finish I ask my students if they think I received the refund. (I did!) One of my students was clever enough to deduce that I had received the refund because, as he put it, “if you hadn’t, you wouldn’t have had us do this activity.”

The next activity is to have students write their own letters, keeping in mind their goals: to describe the given situations clearly, and to come across as **honest** and **reasonable**. Included are two given situations.

Notes for California Pizza Kitchen complaint letter:

Students must choose whether they want to ask for \$200 to replace the boots or \$35 to have them cleaned. We discuss the advantage and disadvantage of each choice:

Asking for \$200 — The restaurant chain would be less likely to proffer the higher sum of money, but then you would be able to replace the boots.

Asking for \$35 — The restaurant chain would be more likely to proffer this small sum of money, but your boots may not end up salvaged.

Notes for Green Valley movie theater complaint letter:

Students must choose what kind of compensation they want to request.

Since it’s implied in the situation that the student and his/her friend do not plan to return to Green Valley anytime soon, I emphasize the importance of including in the complaint letter the fact that the town of Green Valley is a four-hour car ride away and its local movie theater is not part of a chain near their hometown; hence, movie coupons would be valueless.

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Write a two-paragraph letter of complaint/request.

Your situation:

You and your family celebrated your mom's birthday at the California Pizza Kitchen in Westbury, Long Island this past Saturday night. During the meal, your waiter accidentally spilled a glass of Coke on you, soaking your shirt and pants. He apologized profusely, and the manager came over. She offered to pay to have your clothes dry cleaned, but you declined since you were wearing a "run-of-the-mill" flannel top and old jeans. Also, you thought the Coke would come out when you washed your clothes, and it did. So instead the manager gave you and your family free desserts at the end of the meal.

However, what you didn't realize until you got home later that evening was that you were wearing your new suede boots, and the Coke that spilled onto your boots ruined the suede. You feel you should be compensated, because it was the waiter's fault, not yours, that the suede got ruined. Your boots cost \$200 and you still have the receipt. You called two different dry cleaners and were told by both that it would cost \$35 to have your boots cleaned, but there was no guarantee that the suede could be salvaged.

Write the letter:

The first paragraph should describe the events. (*what happened*)

The second paragraph should start with your request for compensation, and then should include the reasons why you believe your request should be granted. (*why they should give you what you are requesting*)



Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Write a two-paragraph letter of complaint/request.

Your situation:

You and your friend took a weekend trip to the small town of Green Valley. You left Friday evening and drove four hours to get to the Green Valley Motel. You had a good time, visiting shops and eating out, until Sunday afternoon when you and your friend went to the local movie theater and bought two overpriced tickets (\$21 each!) to see the latest action movie. For the first five minutes of the movie the sound wasn't working, and then for the next twenty minutes, although the sound was on, there was a vertical line going down the middle of the screen. By then you both felt the movie experience had been ruined, and you went to the box office to get a refund. The teenager in the box office said that he could not give you a refund, and that you would have to speak to the manager who was currently at another movie theater, a fifteen-minute drive away.

You drove to the other theater to speak to the manager, but much to your surprise he said he wouldn't give you a refund, and would only offer you each a coupon to see a different movie. He wouldn't give in, even after you and your friend explained that you had already seen every other movie playing at the two small theaters, and you couldn't use the coupon another day since you were leaving Green Valley that evening and lived four hours away!

Write the letter:

The first paragraph should describe the events. (*what happened*)

The second paragraph should start with your request for compensation, and then should include the reasons why you believe your request should be granted. (*why they should give you what you are requesting*)





Social Skills

Understanding Others

Reference Sheet

Available in the format below:



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Understanding Others Reference Sheet

A few years ago I was driving home from work, thinking about how I'm frequently asking my students on the autism spectrum, "How do you think so-and-so was feeling in this or that situation?" And I was thinking about how much they struggle to answer that question. I realized that I'm asking them to give me information on exactly what they don't know. Wouldn't it be helpful to provide some knowledge, some information that neurotypical individuals know instinctively, before I ask them to identify or predict others' perceptions? So I created a reference sheet of common feelings and perceptions during social interactions, and I've found that many of my students benefit tremendously by having this information on hand when I give them perspective-taking tasks. I've provided three social situations with which to use the reference sheet, but the sheet can be helpful as a reference whenever students are asked to discuss others' points of view.

Name _____

Date _____

Understanding Others Reference Sheet

Top 6 Negative Experiences in Social Interactions

- Having another person think poorly of them (especially looking stupid)
- Being disliked
- Having another person mad at them
- Being rejected/excluded
- Being embarrassed / Loss of privacy
- Hurting someone's feelings (leads to feelings of guilt)

Top 6 Positive Experiences in Social Interactions

- Feeling accepted
- Feeling admired
- Feeling valued
- Enjoying time with another person
- Making someone feel good
- Helping someone out of a bad situation

Top 8 Ways to Make People Feel Good Socially

- Make them feel valued by acknowledging their feelings
- Make them feel accepted by including them socially
- Make them feel accepted by forgiving them
- Make them feel admired by complimenting them
- Build their confidence by encouraging them
- Make them feel important by asking questions about them
- Make them feel valued by expressing your care/concern
- Spend time with them doing something fun or relaxing



Name _____

Date _____

Peter had trouble making friends in school. Some of the other kids would say mean things to him under their breath so that teachers and other adults wouldn't hear. His one friend Molly tried to make him feel better and forget about the other kids. One day Peter had to give a presentation to his class. He heard some of the other students whispering "loser" as he walked to the front of the classroom.



What might Peter be thinking and feeling?

What might Molly be thinking and feeling?

What could Molly do to make Peter feel better?



Name _____

Date _____

Kami worked very hard in her three anthropology courses at college and got one B and two A's. She found out about an internship position at the local museum, and even though she's very shy she set up an interview appointment. When she arrived for her interview, she discovered her outgoing, pretty sister Julie showed up to interview for the same internship!



What might Kami be thinking and feeling?

What might Julie be thinking and feeling?

What could either of them do to make the other feel better?



Name _____

Date _____

Denny and Rick are best friends. They go to a party together one Friday night. At the party, two women come over to where Denny and Rick are sitting. Both women make almost all their eye contact with Denny, and laugh at his jokes. They ask Denny questions about himself, and nod and smile at his answers. They barely acknowledge Rick. Then, one of the women says, "There's going to be an outdoor concert tomorrow night at Haven Park. Why don't we all meet up there, around 8 PM?"



What might Rick be thinking and feeling?

What might Denny be thinking and feeling?

What could Rick do in the moment or later?

What could Denny do in the moment or later?





Social Skills

Developing Empathy

Available in the format below:



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Developing Empathy

This is one of my favorite activities and one that I've found to be highly effective at establishing perspective taking and developing empathy through conversational practice. It starts with an extensive discussion of the importance of empathy followed by comprehensive explanations for the terms "spatial inclusion", "conversational participation", "social distress", and "mood". Students can then practice social observation and determination of others' perspectives by using the handout created for use in sessions, and can learn to generalize by using the homework handout for real-world practice. Included are therapeutic notes on how to best use the materials along with suggestions for modified activities.

Looking Out for Others' Feelings in Conversations

Philosophy:

It's important to look out for others' feelings for two reasons: for their benefit and for your benefit. Treating others with kindness and protecting them from harm is the right thing to do. At the same time, when you treat others well, they will want to spend time with you, will treat you with kindness in return, and will try to protect you from harm.

Physical harm is easy to spot, but social/emotional harm is more subtle and much more difficult to recognize. People are generally social animals and want to feel socially accepted. Conversations can be complicated social interactions. Many dynamics happening during conversations may cause people some amount of emotional discomfort or distress. In order to look out for others' feelings, you need to observe people closely and pay attention to their facial expressions, body language, and voice to try to determine how they are feeling. You also need to analyze the ongoing circumstances that could hurt other people's feelings or cause them any kind of distress. Then, you can avoid causing others discomfort or distress, and may even be able to help them if something or someone else is causing them distress.

Terms and Discussion:

Spatial inclusion: means feeling socially included through spatial positions and body language. In a conversational group, spatial inclusion occurs when each person can see each other person and no one is behind another's back. Socially inclusive conversational groups are typically circular whether sitting or standing (or triangular when there are three people talking). Make sure your body is not blocking anyone and that you can see everyone's face.

Conversational participation: refers to being able to participate in a conversation. Ideally, everyone in a conversation should be able to talk for a fair amount of time, whether commenting or asking questions. Of course, sometimes it's okay for participants to speak for more than their "fair amount". It's fine if sometimes a conversation focuses more on one particular person, when, for example, that person is telling about a recent vacation, is teaching the others a skill, or is discussing a personal hardship and the other people are providing sympathy. But generally, in a conversation between two people, each person should speak for about half of the time, in a conversation between three people, each should speak for about one third of the time, and so on. People typically want to feel listened to, liked, and appreciated.

The following circumstances can block conversational participation:

- being interrupted
- receiving poor responses to participation
- another participant unfairly monopolizing the conversation
- an unfamiliar topic
- unfamiliar references (i.e., some of the other participants bring up unfamiliar information, names, or words, without explanations)



Social distress: refers to emotional distress related to social interaction. As stated earlier, conversations are complicated social interactions. Many social dynamics occur during conversations beyond a simple exchange of information and ideas. Conversation participants can feel accepted or rejected, liked or disliked, trusted or mistrusted, angered or soothed, humored or disappointed. People often cover up negative feelings, especially during social interactions, for a variety of reasons. This is why, in order to look out for others' feelings during conversations, it is necessary to observe participants closely and to be aware of the dynamics occurring during conversations.

The following circumstances can cause social distress:

- being spatially excluded
- being conversationally excluded (due to unfamiliar references, poor responses, or interruptions)
- finding out about social exclusion (e.g., hearing about a party to which you were not invited)
- an offensive topic or statement
- having a secret revealed
- TMI: "too much information" (hearing another's personal information that makes you feel uncomfortable)
- being insulted:
 - directly
 - indirectly (toward a group to which you belong)
 - passive-aggressively (in the form of a joke or phony compliment)

Mood: refers to an emotional state. Often, a person's mood may have little or nothing to do with the present social situation. For instance, a person may be in a bad mood because of an argument that took place earlier in the day, because the rainy weather makes him feel gloomy, or because he ate too many carbohydrates and his blood sugar level has dropped. But much of the time we do have emotional reactions to ongoing social circumstances. In a single conversation, social dynamics could cause a person to feel momentarily angered, then relieved, then happy, then insulted, and so on. As stated earlier, people often don't want to reveal their negative feelings during social interactions. So you will need to look for clues to determine how others are feeling. Non-verbal clues can reveal emotions. These include facial expressions, body language, and voice.

The following may be signs of negative emotions:

- facial expressions
 - a lack of smiling
 - avoiding eye contact
 - eyebrows pointing up in the middle or creased in between
 - lips held tightly together
- body language
 - arms crossed
 - biting nails
 - head down
- voice
 - volume increasing or decreasing
 - higher or lower than normal pitch, strained tone
 - flat intonation

Name _____

Date _____

Looking Out for Others' Feelings

Directions:

- 1) After being assigned a person to look out for, fill that person's name into every blank on this page.
- 2) During a conversation, pay attention to that person: his/her spatial inclusion, his/her conversational participation, possible instances of distress to him/her and the causes, and his/her mood.
- 3) After the conversation answer the questions below.
- 4) Discuss your answers with your assigned person to see if he/she did feel the way you believe he/she felt.

Person you are looking out for: _____

Did _____ feel socially included spatially? ____ yes ____ no

Did _____ get a chance to participate in the conversation?

____ yes

____ no if no, why not?

Did anything happen that may have caused _____ to feel any distress during the conversation?

____ no

____ yes if yes, what happened?

What kind of mood do you think _____ was in for most of the conversation?

What made you think that?

What could you have done to make things better for _____?



Name _____

Due Date _____

Looking Out for Others' Feelings Homework

Directions: Use "Terms and Discussion" section to review definitions of terms and possible causes of distress and participation blocks. Observe casual conversations (in school, at home, anywhere) and pay attention to others' experiences and feelings during those social interactions. See if you notice any instances when a person was spatially excluded, lacked conversational participation, or may have experienced some distress during a conversation. Fill in at least one of the following.

Note: you can use pseudonyms in place of real names if you prefer.

1. _____ (person's name) was spatially excluded during a conversation in/at _____ (location or context).

Describe the spatial exclusion you observed and whether or not it was resolved:

2. _____ (person's name) demonstrated reduced conversational participation in/at _____ (location or context).

Describe possible cause(s) of the reduced conversational participation:

3. _____ (person's name) may have experienced some distress during a conversation in/at _____ (location or context).

Describe situation and possible cause(s) of distress:



Therapeutic Notes: Developing Empathy

I have found this exercise to be one of the most beneficial I've ever done with my students. Students who need to work on their social skills, including many children and individuals on the autism spectrum, often require concrete discussion and practice regarding awareness of others' thoughts and feelings as distinct from their own (theory of mind), and this exercise works directly on those skills. Many activities can be derived from these worksheets. Every element could be worked on extensively separately, such as spatial inclusion, or reading non-verbal communication clues. Elements could be worked on prior, after, or in conjunction with this exercise. When I have the conversation with my students during which they look out for one another's feelings, I do things to deliberately cause the students some distress, such as interrupt them, spatially exclude them, etc. I do this because a short, innocuous conversation won't typically cause the participants much distress, and one of the goals of the exercise is for students to be able to spot one another's distress. Of course, I do this exercise with students with whom I have established a nice rapport, I usually tell them I plan to cause them some distress, and I engage in annoying behaviors with a shared sense of humor. The homework sheet is a very important component of this lesson, since generalization of social skills into real life contexts is integral. When you discuss with students their observations recorded on the homework sheet, I would recommend asking what, if anything, they did to help out the other person(s), and if they did nothing, what they think they could have done, or would do if they find themselves in a similar situation in the future, to help.





Social Skills

Perspective Taking

Homework Assignment

Available in the format below:



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Perspective Taking Homework Assignment

Observation is key to improving social awareness and subsequent social functioning. This homework assignment begins with a comprehensive discussion on the development of perspective taking and follows with a homework sheet that assigns students or clients the task of noticing social interactions and speculating on the emotional effect of those interactions on the participants. The discussion and assignment work together to improve students' social awareness, perspective taking skills, and the development of empathy.

Name _____

Due Date _____

Put Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes

Situation 1

where:

when:

context (people involved and situation):

If I were in _____'s shoes I would feel:

Situation 2

where:

when:

context (people involved and situation):

If I were in _____'s shoes I would feel:

I may have been able to help _____ in Situation ____ by
(doing what?):



Therapeutic Notes: Perspective Taking Homework

Developing empathy is not an easy task for many of my students on the autism spectrum (or even for teenagers in general!) I believe observation is key. Individuals on the autism spectrum do not naturally observe others' facial expressions, body language, actions, or interactions nearly as often, as attentively, or as effectively as neurotypical individuals do. If this kind of observation does not come naturally to my students, then we have to start artificially—in the form of an assigned task. Practice, coupled with motivation stemming from discussions on the possible benefits derived from “reading” others, improves observation frequency and skill. And the ability to observe others goes hand-in-hand with developing insight into others' thoughts, feelings, and motivations, in other words: perspective taking!

Now, as a speech language pathologist working at a Regents high school, I infrequently give my students homework, and when I do I give homework that requires a minimum amount of effort, since I know that they receive a lot of homework from their academic courses. But after working with my students on observation skills, such as Michelle Garcia Winner's “Thinking with Your Eyes”, and after discussing perspective taking and empathy with them, I often give them the preceding assignment. I explain that I want them to observe the people around them, in class, at home, outdoors, in restaurants, etc., and to take note of instances when someone was emotionally affected by events, especially when negatively affected. We discuss the types of events that could cause a person to have a negative emotional reaction, such as being interrupted during a class discussion or overlooked from a social invitation. We specifically discuss that many instances are subtle and that often the people affected may not show outward signs of distress. Then I give them the due date, tell them they can use pseudonyms if they prefer, and send them on their way.

When they turn in the assignment, they share their descriptions of the two situations with the other students in our speech language session, along with their ideas of how they could have helped the affected individual (the secondary yet important piece of learning to empathize!) and then we discuss. One pattern I've observed is that very often my students write about situations where the negative effect is obvious, such as someone getting yelled at. We then review possible subtle effects, and I may have them redo the assignment or simply discuss on the spot a subtler situation that they've observed. Interestingly, I once had a particularly egocentric student write about situations where he himself was the injured party, and the two people he used as examples of being negatively affected were two people he thought felt bad for him on his behalf. Obviously, I had sent this student out to do the assignment without sufficient explanation and discussion. After further discussion, I had him redo the assignment and he did much better the second time around.





Social Skills

Polite Wording

Available in the format below:



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Polite Wording

This straightforward worksheet works on listener presupposition and perspective taking skills. It begins with a written discussion of thinking about your listener before speaking and why it's important to modify your requests and comments in order to get the best results. It provides examples of polite phrases to add to requests and opinion statements, followed by several sentences into which students can incorporate those phrases. This activity gives students practice at modifying their wording while considering their listeners' feelings.

Name _____

Date _____

Adjusting Your Wording to Fit the Situation

How we say something is often as important as what we say.

We should try to predict how our listener would react to what we say.

Choose your wording carefully to get the best reaction.

In some situations, being assertive is best.

In many other situations, being gentle is best.

Think of situations where it is best to use gentle wording. **Discuss.**

Here are some words/phrases that “soften” your requests and opinions:

“I think”	“I believe”	“perhaps”	“maybe”	“might”	“could”
“it might be a good idea”	“try to”	“please”	“can”	“if”	“would”
“often”	“sometimes”	“it may be”	“it could be”	“I’d appreciate it if”	

Soften the following requests and opinions:

1. Move your book off the table.
2. Give me a pencil.
3. Let me speak.
4. I have the best solution.
5. He definitely cheated.
6. Take this to Larry.
7. Talk to your girlfriend again.
8. Women are more nurturing than men.
9. New York is the best city in the world.
10. Buy me new sneakers.
11. I want French fries and an iced tea.



Adjusting Your Wording to Fit the Situation

Answer Key

How we say something is often as important as what we say.
We should try to predict how our listener would react to what we say.
Choose your wording carefully to get the best reaction.
In some situations, being assertive is best.
In many other situations, being gentle is best.

Think of situations where it is best to use gentle wording. **Discuss.**

(Note: After hearing from your students, you can point out that each of the eleven sentences below can be categorized as either a request or comment/opinion. You can discuss how softening requests will often make the person you are talking to more amenable to fulfilling your request, and how softening an opinion makes your listener less likely to view you as antagonistic and therefore less likely to respond defensively.)

Here are some words/phrases that “soften” your requests and opinions:

“I think”	“I believe”	“perhaps”	“maybe”	“might”	“could”
“it might be a good idea”	“try to”	“please”	“can”	“if”	“would”
“often”	“sometimes”	“it may be”	“it could be”	“I’d appreciate it if”	

Soften the following requests and opinions:

(Note: Answers provided are samples.)

1. Could you please move your book off the table.
2. I’d appreciate it if you would give me a pencil.
3. Please try to let me speak.
4. I believe I may have the best solution.
5. I think he may have cheated.
6. Could you please take this to Larry?
7. Perhaps try talking to your girlfriend again.
8. I feel that women are sometimes more nurturing than men.
9. I believe that New York is the best city in the world.
10. Would you please buy new sneakers for me?
11. I would like French fries and an iced tea, thank you.



Social Skills

Tact

Available in the format below:



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Tact

Tact requires putting yourself in someone else's shoes and seeing things from his or her perspective. This handout works directly on the ability to understand others' points of view, to evaluate statements' properties of offensiveness, bragging, inappropriateness, over-generalization and prejudice. Students are presented with a list of nineteen statements to use for discussion regarding the tactless elements of each, and, more specifically, how each statement could make another person feel. Includes an answer key.

Name _____

Date _____

Being Tactful

Directions: What is insensitive about each of the following statements?

1. I would never put one of my parents in a nursing home.
2. Are you scared to walk around your neighborhood?
3. Our president is an idiot!
4. If I ended up being a waiter I would feel like a total failure.
5. My parents just bought a new projector for our theater room.
6. Women are the worst drivers.
7. Are you going to Amy's party this Saturday?
8. Halloween is for babies.
9. You thought that test was hard??
10. Jesus Christ is my personal savior.
11. After my cruise to the Bahamas, I'm going skiing in Switzerland.
12. If my boss asks me one more stupid question I'm going to strangle him.
13. I'm so glad I'm not crippled.
14. I would never take medication for depression.
15. People can't understand what I'm saying because of my high intelligence.
16. I usually hang with college kids.
17. That test was so easy!
18. There are a lot of Jews moving into my neighborhood.
19. Did you hear that Danny's mom is gay?

Being Tactful — Answer Key

Directions: What is insensitive about each of the following statements?

1. I would never put one of my parents in a nursing home.

Implies that someone who has done this is uncaring.

2. Are you scared to walk around your neighborhood?

Implies that the person you are talking to lives in a “bad” neighborhood.

3. Our president is an idiot!

You usually shouldn’t discuss politics, religion, or sex.

4. If I ended up being a waiter I would feel like a total failure.

What if the person you are talking to or one of his or her loved ones is a waiter or waitress?

5. My parents just bought a new projector for our theater room.

You are bragging about your or your family’s wealth.

6. Women are the worst drivers.

You just insulted half the population.

7. Are you going to Amy’s party this Saturday?

What if the person you are talking to wasn’t invited?

8. Halloween is for babies.

What if the person you are talking to enjoys Halloween?

You just implied that he or she is immature.

9. You thought that test was hard??

You just implied that the person you are talking to is dumb.

10. Jesus Christ is my personal savior.

See number three.



- 11.** After my cruise to the Bahamas, I'm going skiing in Switzerland.
Again, sounds like bragging about your wealth. Also, this can make someone feel bad if he or she cannot afford to go anywhere.
- 12.** If my boss asks me one more stupid question I'm going to strangle him.
It is very unprofessional to badmouth anyone at your job, and you should never verbalize a threat, even when joking.
- 13.** I'm so glad I'm not crippled.
What if the person you are talking to has a loved one who is disabled?
- 14.** I would never take medication for depression.
Implies that someone who takes medication for depression is weak or misguided.
- 15.** People can't understand what I'm saying because of my high intelligence.
Bragging about your intelligence while insulting others' intelligence is pretty obnoxious!
- 16.** I usually hang with college kids.
Implies that the person you are talking to is not mature enough for you.
- 17.** That test was so easy!
This statement is bragging and also could make anyone who didn't find the test easy feel dumb.
- 18.** There are a lot of Jews moving into my neighborhood.
Even if it's true, why are you mentioning it? This statement implies anti-Semitism.
- 19.** Did you hear that Danny's mom is gay?
Even if it's true, why are you gossiping? Also, this statement implies that there's something wrong with, or at the very least noteworthy about, being gay.



Social Skills

Speaking to Different Communicative Partners

Available in the format below:



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Speaking to Different Communicative Partners

Adjusting to your communicative partner is an important skill with which individuals on the autism spectrum often struggle. Keeping your listeners in mind (listener presupposition) in terms of what information they need or don't need, and how your words give them a specific impression of you, is essential to successful communication. These worksheets work directly on improving listener presupposition skills. Students write down hypothetical verbal answers to various questions, without knowing to whom they are speaking, (I fold under the bottom of the page so students don't see Step B yet). They then go back and choose which parts of their answers they would keep or omit, given the identity of their listeners, including a new friend, a job interviewer, a grandparent, etc. Choices made can then be discussed and modified. Three separate worksheets ensure improvement of your students' perspective taking and listener presupposition skills.

Name _____

Date _____

Speaking to Different Communicative Partners — 1

Step A: Write out answers to the following requests for information:

1. Tell me a little about yourself.

2. Tell me about your school.

3. What do you want to do for your future career and why?

Step B: Now go back and **highlight** all the information you would want to give to a job interviewer and underline all the information you would want to give to a new friend. (Note: you may overlap highlights and underlines.)

Step C: Discuss choices, including why you would give some info to a new friend that you wouldn't give to a job interviewer, and vice versa.



Name _____

Date _____

Speaking to Different Communicative Partners — 2

Step A: Write out answers to the following requests for information:

1. What is your greatest strength?

2. What is your greatest weakness?

3. What is the toughest problem you've had to face and how did you overcome it?

Step B: Now go back and **highlight** all the information you would want to give to a job interviewer and underline all the information you would want to give to your mom/dad/sibling/grandparent (choose one).

(Note: you may overlap highlights and underlines.)

Step C: Discuss why you made the choices you made.



Name _____

Date _____

Speaking to Different Communicative Partners — 3

We always need to modify what we say depending on to whom we are speaking. We have to think about the needs of that person and how he or she should be treated, and we also need to think about what kind of impression we want to make on that person, i.e., how we want them to view us.

Step A: Write out answers to the following questions. Keep in mind to whom you are speaking and what kind of impression you want them to have of you.

1. A new friend asks you to tell a little about yourself.

2. Your grandparent asks you to tell about school.

3. A job interviewer asks what you want to do for your future career and why.



4. A new coworker asks what you think is your greatest strength.

5. A tutor/teacher/therapist (choose one) asks what's your greatest weakness.

6. Your best friend asks what is the toughest problem you've ever had to face and how did you handle it.

Step B: Discuss why you decided to include the information that you did.

Step C: Discuss what kind of impression you wanted to make, and also how you thought about the needs of each of your listeners.





Conversation Skills

Time Sensitivity

Available in the format below:



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Conversational Time Sensitivity

One of the most common conversational errors made by individuals on the autism spectrum (and many neurotypical individuals!) is overextending their conversational turns. Many factors can be involved in this kind of mistake, including limited listener presupposition skills, deficient perspective taking, and trouble evaluating a communicative partner's interest level. This activity provides practice with determining an appropriate time period for a conversational turn by taking into account the context and the conversational partner, and then conveying assigned semantic content accurately within that time period.

Following a written discussion on the need to be sensitive to a listener's time limit, students roll a die to be assigned hypothetical content (what to say) and a context (to whom they are speaking and in what situation). After considering the context, students estimate an appropriate time period, and then practice providing their assigned content within that time period. This social skills activity works on increasing students' awareness of their listener's needs (listener presupposition) and improving their ability to limit the time they use to convey their content in order to best fit those needs. I recommend combining this activity with *Kinesics: Interest vs. Disinterest* and *Editing Verbal Narratives*, as all three address the need to limit content in order to best suit the needs of communicative partners.

Name _____

Date _____

TIME SENSITIVE TALKING

Often, we need to modify how we're going to say something depending on how much time we have to speak. We need to be sensitive to our listener's time limit. Maybe our listener is busy. Maybe he/she has to go somewhere. Maybe he/she has a lot of tasks to get done. Maybe he/she wants to talk to others. Maybe he/she is getting bored because you are going into too much detail.

Roll the die to find out what you need to say (the content). If you roll a two, three, or four you will need to fill in the blank. Then roll the die again to find out to whom and in what situation you will be speaking. First estimate for how many seconds you should speak given the context and explain why. Then say what you need to say within that time frame.

Content: What You Need to Say

- 1) Tell about your weekend
- 2) Describe how to _____
- 3) Explain why you _____
- 4) List the advantages of _____
- 5) Tell about your best friend
- 6) Describe your most difficult school assignment

Context: To Whom You Are Talking and the Situation

- 1) Your school principal stops to chat in the hallway between classes
- 2) Your host/hostess at a party
- 3) A job interviewer asks you for the information
- 4) Your mom while she's driving you to soccer practice
- 5) Your guidance counselor in the school cafeteria
- 6) Your cousin at a family wedding





Conversation Skills

Editing Verbal Narratives

Available in the format below:



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Editing Verbal Narratives

So many of my students on the autism spectrum have trouble editing themselves when they're telling me about a vacation they went on or their favorite video game, as examples, often providing too many details because they're not keeping their listener in mind. I have found that these worksheets work directly and effectively on this issue. Students are provided with a written example of a verbal narrative, and must delete details in order to best serve a given listener and context (employing listener presupposition). We then discuss all the choices made, such as how one portion could be interesting to a listener and therefore kept in, while another portion is redundant or too detailed and should be omitted. Also included are discussion notes for therapeutic intervention, along with a reproducible form with a blank narrative portion. If students agree, we audiotape narratives (theirs or others') in conversations, transcribe them onto the reproducible forms, and then use that content for analysis.

Name _____

Date _____

Remember: When telling a story, you want to make it clear and interesting for your listener. You don't want your listener to be confused or bored.

Who are you telling the story to?

What is the context?

Directions: Cross out irrelevant and unnecessary details.

"Over the summer I went to this camp in the Poconos called Mountain Spring Camp. It was about ten miles past the town of Buckwheat off Route 62. You go down into a valley and then up beyond a bunch of cornfields until you start to climb up a very steep mountain road. I slept in a cabin with twelve other kids, and this one kid, Sam, snored so loudly every night that I had a hard time sleeping. I would always try to fall asleep before the snoring started, but Sam always fell asleep before me. Ughh! That part was awful! Every morning, after getting very little sleep, I would go kayaking on the lake. It was so beautiful, with tall pine trees surrounding the lake and hawks flying overhead, and afterwards we would all jump into the icy, cold water. I'd say the water temperature was like 65 degrees, even though the air temperature was in the 80s. After our swim, we'd all be starving and they always served giant breakfasts, with scrambled eggs or fried eggs, bacon and sausage, banana pancakes, and the most delicious honey-flavored butter. My first counselor was pretty nice, but they got a bad stomach flu two weeks into the session, and they had to go back home to New Jersey, I think they came from a town called Cherry Hill. The replacement counselor was kinda mean and hated being asked any questions so we all tried to keep our mouths shut and not ask any questions. The best part of camp was archery. I got pretty good at it and even won the archery contest! I found out that the feather part of the arrows comes from a special kind of red-tailed cardinal that lives in Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado. It used to live in Utah, but I think there aren't any more there because all the eagles in Utah killed them off or chased them into the other states I guess. So that's what I did over the summer."

Discussion for Summer Camp Verbal Narrative

Note: Of course choices regarding what to include and what to omit depend in part on the listeners' interests. As one possible guideline, I have crossed out phrases and sentences I recommend my students omit, followed by a discussion in parentheses, and recommend keeping the remaining phrases and sentences, followed by the rationale in parentheses.

Who are you telling the story to? My speech therapist

What is the context? During my first individual session of a new school year she says, "so tell me all about your summer!"

"Over the summer I went to this camp in the Poconos called Mountain Spring Camp. (good beginning, includes basic information) ~~It was about ten miles past the town of Buckwheat off Route 62. You go down into a valley and then up beyond a bunch of cornfields until you start to climb up a very steep mountain road. (I tell my students that these details are not of interest, unless I lived near to the camp and then perhaps I'd be interested in how far past the town of Buckwheat the camp is located)~~ I slept in a cabin with twelve other kids, (paints a picture for your listener) and this one kid, Sam, snored so loudly every night that I had a hard time sleeping. I would always try to fall asleep before the snoring started, but Sam always fell asleep before me. (this is interesting and comical!) Ughh! That part was awful! (I tell my students that emotions make a story impactful) Every morning, ~~after getting very little sleep, (unnecessary/obvious)~~ I would go kayaking on the lake. It was so beautiful, with tall pine trees surrounding the lake and hawks flying overhead, and afterwards we would all jump into the icy, cold water. (Nice description) ~~I'd say the water temperature was like 65 degrees, even though the air temperature was in the 80s. (too much detail)~~ After our swim, we'd all be starving and they always served giant breakfasts, ~~with scrambled eggs or fried eggs, bacon and sausage, banana pancakes, and the most delicious honey-flavored butter. (too much detail—I have my students guess which specific food items to leave in if they were to leave in any—the answer is the banana pancakes and honey-flavored butter. They are interesting because they are out of the ordinary)~~ My first counselor was pretty nice, but ("but" is a transition word that introduces a contrast, and contrasting or conflicting information is often interesting) ~~they got a bad stomach flu (gross details are interesting!)~~ two weeks



into the session, and they had to go back home to New Jersey, I think they came from a town called Cherry Hill. *(I tell my students where the counselor came from is not an interesting detail, unless they came from someplace unusual such as New Zealand or Peru)* The replacement counselor was kinda mean and hated being asked any questions *(negative experiences are often interesting)* so we all tried to keep our mouths shut and not ask any questions. *(redundant)* The best part of camp was archery. *(best and worst features are usually interesting)* I got pretty good at it and even won the archery contest! *(noteworthy)* I found out that the feather part of the arrows comes from a special kind of red-tailed cardinal that lives in Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado. It used to live in Utah, but I think there aren't any more there because all the eagles in Utah killed them off or chased them into the other states I guess. *(too much detail unless your listener is an ornithologist)* So that's what I did over the summer." *(even though this is redundant, it's an appropriate way to end a story)*



Name _____

Date _____

Remember: When telling a story, you want to make it clear and interesting for your listener. You don't want your listener to be confused or bored.

Who are you telling the story to?

What is the context?

Directions: Cross out irrelevant and unnecessary details.





Social Skills

Greetings

Available in the format below:



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Greetings

Neurotypical individuals closely observe other humans literally from birth. Individuals on the autism spectrum typically observe others much less often—one of the reasons they are usually significantly less aware of social customs. Greeting others is not as simple as it would seem. Take the example of two men passing each other at work. The social norm could be a quick nod in greeting if they were acquaintances. A verbal “good morning” could actually be judged as a little odd. Students on the spectrum can use this reference sheet to become familiar with the many choices of greetings, as well as the contexts in which to use them when paired with discussion.

Name _____

Date _____

Greetings Reference Sheet

Initiate or Be Reciprocal

Greeting

“Hi”

“Hey” (informal)

“What’s up” (to a peer)

“Hello”

“Good morning”

“Good afternoon”

“How are you?” (rhetorical)

“How’s it going?” (rhetorical)

“Hi + (name)”

“Hey + (name)”

eye contact and nod or smile (to an acquaintance / passing by after previously greeted)

Additional: Greeting on Mondays

“How was your weekend?”

“Did you have a good weekend?”

“Did you do anything fun over the weekend?” (to a friendly acquaintance or friend)

“You look like how I feel” (to a close friend)

Leaving

“Bye”

“Goodbye”

“See you later”

“Talk to you later”

“Catch you later” (informal / to a peer)

“Later” (informal / to a peer)

“See you tomorrow”

“Have a good day”

“Bye + (name)”

“Okay, bye”

eye contact and brief wave (to an acquaintance)

Additional: Leaving on Fridays

“See you Monday”

“Have a good weekend”

“Enjoy your weekend”

“Have any plans for the weekend?” (to a friendly acquaintance)

“Anything fun happening this weekend?” (to a friend)





Social Skills

Getting Someone's Attention

Available in the format below:



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Getting Someone's Attention

Many skills that may seem simple are not so simple for individuals with impaired social skills. That's one reason I like to take my students out on walks, and if possible, into stores or restaurants. Functioning in the "real world" involves many more social skills than coming to my office for sessions. I've discovered issues on walks that I wouldn't have observed in my office, such as the time a student walked behind me instead of alongside. Or the time I took who I thought were two conversationally sophisticated students (based on my talks with them) for a walk and finally shut up. I soon discovered they couldn't say two words to each other; despite my eventual attempts at prompting some conversation, the three of us continued the walk in silence. It was eye opening, and led to a focus on some new, much needed goals. Something as seemingly simple as getting someone's attention involves much more than you may initially think. I realized this when I observed one of my students, (a student that I believed had pretty appropriate social skills), tasked with getting the attention of a teacher. This student went to the teacher's classroom and called out from the doorway, even though the teacher was 20 feet away and in the middle of speaking to a coworker. I have my students practice the skill of approaching staff members after discussing all the possible variables, including an open vs. closed door, the staff member on the phone, in an in-person conversation, reading or writing, conducting a class, or in the hallway. I then give my students the following form in an envelope, and ask them to deliver it to specific staff members. When my coworkers return the filled-out forms, I find out for which aspects of gaining someone's attention my students need more intervention. Also, I'll go over the staff members' evaluations with the students I think would be receptive to the direct critique.

Hi! The student that hand delivered this note to you is working on communication skills including getting someone's attention appropriately.

Would you kindly answer the questions below and return to me?

Your name: _____

Student's name: _____ (if known)

Date: _____

Yes

No

Did the student knock (if needed)?

Did the student look you in the eye?

Did the student say, "Excuse me"?

Did the student use your name?

Did the student say, "This is from _____"?

Was the student an appropriate distance from you when first speaking?

Did the student get your attention appropriately, i.e., by waiting for you to make eye contact and showing signs you can now be addressed if you were talking to a coworker or on the phone?

Comments?

Thank you! From _____





Social Skills

Restaurant Etiquette

Available in the format below:



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Restaurant Etiquette

This activity addresses a life skill adolescents may not have much experience with yet, at least not for certain aspects including making a reservation and getting the check. Eating out is a social experience even when dining alone, because it still involves interacting with servers and possibly hosts/hostesses, cashiers, and busboys. Therefore, it requires perspective taking. With that in mind, I like to discuss how behaviors can affect others, such as why it's not a good idea to arrive at a restaurant close to closing time, or why politeness matters.

Name _____

Date _____

Restaurant Etiquette

Making a reservation:

- When calling, ask for a time and tell how many people: “Hi, I’d like to make a reservation for 7:30 this evening for four people.”

Q: *In what situations should you make a reservation?*

Arriving:

- Arrive with most or all of your people (your party).
- Be aware of closing times—don’t arrive close to closing time.
- Approach host/hostess, make eye contact, say, “Hi, table for ____ (number), please.” or if you’ve made a reservation say “Hi, I have a reservation for ____ (your name).”

Q: *What do you do if not everyone in your party has arrived yet?*

Being seated:

- Follow the host/hostess to the table and say “thank you” when you get to the table.

Q: *What do you do if you don’t like where you’re seated? (How picky is too picky?)*

Ordering:

- Make eye contact.
- Be polite: “Can I have ...” “I would like ...” “Please” “Thank you”
- Try to order everything together (except dessert).
- Don’t say you’re allergic to a certain food when the truth is you just don’t like it.
- Thank busboys or servers each time they bring something, including water and bread.

Q: *Can you ask to switch something, like French fries with your meal instead of rice?*

Eating the meal:

Q: *How could you handle the following situations?*

- you are brought the wrong food
- you are unhappy with your food
- you find a bug or a hair in your food
- you need to get your server’s attention
- you drop a utensil on the floor
- you knock over your drink
- you are celebrating the birthday of one of the people at your table
- the server spills food or a drink on you
- there’s a long line of people waiting for a table watching you eat

Paying:

- To get the bill make eye contact with your server and mouth “check” while making a writing motion in the air with one hand.
- At some restaurants, like diners, you bring the bill to the cash register and pay.
- At other restaurants, you leave your money or card in the check holder and place it at the edge of the table.

Q: *What if you and your friends want to split the bill?*

Q: *How much should you tip?*

Q: *What are the different ways to leave a tip?*



Social Skills

Answering Job Interview Questions

Available in the format below:



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Answering Job Interview Questions

This worksheet provides a detailed guide to answering the top four most commonly asked questions in job interviews. It gives step-by-step directions and includes lots of example answers. The worksheet also describes how to use listener presupposition: thinking about the perspective of your communicative partner, in this case the job interviewer, when responding to questions. More specifically, it encourages students to think about what impressions they want the interviewer to have of them, and then explains how to answer to give those targeted impressions. After going over the worksheet together, we use role-play to practice.

Name _____

Date _____

Answering Job Interview Questions

Answering: **“Tell me a little about yourself”**

Your answer should show the interviewer that you possess the qualities they want in an employee.

These are some of the qualities that make a good worker:

Hardworking
Organized
Flexible
Punctual
Kind/Friendly
Energetic
Calm
Respectful
Curious
Mature
Responsible/Reliable
Attentive
Patient
Disciplined
Steadfast
Creative

- Directions: **1)** Highlight the qualities above that you believe you possess.
 2) For each highlighted quality, state an example to demonstrate.

Examples:

“I’m always punctual. I make sure I leave my apartment early enough so I can be on time even if the subway is running late.”

“I’m flexible. When I work on group projects in school, I’m okay with doing tasks the way the other students want to, even if it’s not always the way I would prefer.”

- 3)** Name two activities you like to do in your free time that demonstrate at least one of the above qualities.

Examples:

“I’ve been studying ballet since I was five years old.” (shows you are disciplined and steadfast)

“My family and I foster kittens to socialize them and help them be adoptable.” (shows you are patient, responsible, and kind)

Now answer the question “tell me a little about yourself” with:

- general info (your grade, where you live and/or go to school)
- one or two qualities you possess with examples (#2 above)
- two activities you like to do in your free time (#3 above)



Answering: **“What would you say are your greatest strengths?”**

Basically describe two or three qualities you possess (that you have not already mentioned) along with examples that demonstrate those qualities. (more of #2 above)

Answering the difficult question: **“What is your biggest weakness?”**

Be prepared with an answer to this question!

State a real weakness, and then include a “but” with a compensation or strategy.

Some ideas:

- “I’m 16, so I don’t have much work experience. **But** I’m a fast learner.”
- “I’m 16, so I don’t have a lot of work experience. **But** through my high school I’ve gotten experience one morning a week at different jobs since my freshman year.”
- “I don’t have the greatest memory, **but** I’ve learned to write down information and keep very organized.”
- “Sometimes I may need directions clarified, **but** I make sure to ask right away if I don’t understand something fully. I’ll never pretend I know what to do if I don’t, because I want to make sure I get things done the right way.”

Answering: **“Why do you want to work here?”**

Do your research ahead of time so you know some information about the place you’re applying to!

Start your answer with how the job will benefit you.

Some ideas:

- “I’m hoping to work in the field of education in my future, so I believe that being a camp counselor will give me excellent experience working with kids.”
- “I believe working at your law firm will show me the ins and outs of how a law firm functions, and will help me decide if becoming a lawyer is really for me.”

Finish your answer with how hiring you will benefit them.

Some ideas:

- “I believe that my creativity could bring some fresh ideas to your store.” (better have at least one idea ready in case they ask!)
- “I feel that my organizational skills would make me well suited to working on your filing system and doing whatever clerical tasks you give me.”

***Special note:** It’s okay to take a couple moments to think before answering questions, and don’t worry about looking nervous. Interviewers expect applicants to be a little nervous and taking time to think just shows that you care about doing well.





Social Skills

Passive Aggression

Available in the format below:



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Passive Aggression

It is very difficult to deal with passive aggression from others. But I like to help students learn how to spot it and how to deal with it, because passive aggressive comments and behaviors are hostile and my students don't deserve hostility. We start by discussing the name: "aggressive" referring to active hostility and "passive" because the perpetrator wants to engage in belligerent behaviors without being called out. I give my students examples of insults that sound like compliments, such as "I love that top on you—you don't look so fat in it". Then, for each example listed we discuss how it is hostile (the aggression—often an implied insult or an attempt to embarrass) and how the perpetrator tries to mask the hostility (the passive nature). We then discuss how to handle the comment or behavior. I encourage my students to calmly call the other person on the hostility for two reasons: first, I want them to stand up for themselves, and second, getting called on can discourage the perpetrator from attempting passive aggressive comments and behaviors moving forward. Of course, there can be various circumstances that would deter my students from speaking up, and they need to do what works best for them in any situation.

Name _____

Date _____

Spotting and Dealing with Passive Aggressive Comments and Behaviors

Directions: Discuss patterns of passive aggressive acts and making a decision to react. Then, discuss the passive aggressive nature of each of the following and effective ways to deal with each.

1. You and your friend are walking through a mall. Your friend says, “Oh, those two girls we just passed are so mean! They were making fun of your pants!”
2. Your family recently was able to move from a small home into a bigger place. Your friend says, “You must be so happy in your new home—your other place was tiny. I know you’re relieved to be in a bigger home.”
3. After getting test results back in class, a classmate glances at your test and says to you, “I give you a lot of credit! I know Earth Science doesn’t come easily to you, so you must have put in a lot of study time to pull off that 88 you got!”
4. A coworker says to you in front of other coworkers, “Hey, good job dealing with that student. I don’t know why he always gives you such a hard time!”
5. You are 5’2” tall. A 5’9” friend tells you, “You are so lucky! It must be nice to be able to always fit into small spaces. I have to scrunch up my legs to fit.”
6. You deal with frequent breakouts and today you have a major zit right in the middle of your forehead. At lunch, a clear-skinned classmate says to you in front of several other classmates, “Remind me to give you the number of my dermatologist. She’s great and will clear you up in no time.”
7. In gym class, one of the hottest students (whom you secretly have a crush on) hangs out with you throughout the whole period. When the bell rings, your best friend (who knows about your crush) walks by and, in view of your crush, gives you a big smile and a thumbs-up.
8. You got the worst haircut, but at a party the next night no one sees it since you’ve so expertly hidden it under your new cap. A friend (who was with you when you got the haircut) takes the cap off your head at the party to try on and after seeing your face says, “oh no, sorry! I totally forgot!”



Social Skills

Attaining Targeted Impressions

Available in the format below:



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Attaining Targeted Impressions

Moving on from *Impressions from Appearances*, I talk with my students about how, in addition to our appearance, everything we say and everything we do gives others an impression of us. Therefore, we have significant control over what others think of us. We discuss how we would like different people in various contexts to have different impressions of us. For example, we may want our grandma to see us as loving and kind-hearted, while at a job interview we probably want the interviewer to think we are responsible and hardworking. *Attaining Targeted Impressions* provides four different scenarios that students can use to practice thinking about how they want to come across and what they can do to give those desired impressions. Fill in the scenarios with situations that are relevant to your individual students' lives.

Name _____

Date _____

Attaining Targeted Impressions

Directions: For each scenario, think about what you want the other person to think of you.

Scenario 1

who:

context:

impressions you'd like them to have of you:

1.

2.

3.

things you could say:

things you could do:

Scenario 2

who:

context:

impressions you'd like them to have of you:

1.

2.

3.

things you could say:

things you could do:



Scenario 3

who:

context:

impressions you'd like them to have of you:

1.

2.

3.

things you could say:

things you could do:

Scenario 4

who:

context:

impressions you'd like them to have of you:

1.

2.

3.

things you could say:

things you could do:

Directions: Answer the following questions.

1. For which scenario do you think you would be most successful at giving your targeted impression?
2. Which scenario would you find most difficult?
3. For which scenario would the context matter most?



Social Skills

Impressions from Appearances

Available in the format below:



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Impressions from Appearances

I tell my students that they are constantly being judged by their appearance. Not that it's right to be judged or judge others from how they look—it just is. Strangers on the street are getting an impression of them just from how they look: their face, their hair, their body, their clothes, their posture, and their actions. I also tell them that the impressions derived from appearances are often not accurate. I use the *Impressions from Appearances* activity to increase my students' awareness of this phenomenon, and also to demonstrate that the conclusions we may jump to from appearances can be wrong. For the activity, we take turns “being judged”, as the others fill out the form together. I always go first, and I never make a student who seems uncomfortable take a turn. Also, almost every appearance feature on the form is one that we have control over, such as clothing. I purposely didn't include body features such as height or weight. For “face”, we focus on controllable features, including makeup or beards. I make sure to point out that the possible impressions various appearances give are often mistaken stereotypes, e.g., women with a lot of tattoos are radical or men who wear jewelry must be gay. After the form is filled out for each turn, the person judged goes through the “possible impressions” and tells if each is accurate, somewhat accurate, or inaccurate.

Name _____

Date _____

Impressions from Appearances

Appearance

Possible Impression

hair

color: _____

length: _____

other: _____

face

shirt/blouse/top

pants/skirt/shorts

shoes

accessories

body language

eye contact: _____

arms: _____

legs: _____

miscellaneous:

actions



Name _____

Date _____

Impressions from Appearances Sample (teenage girl)

Appearance

Possible Impression

hair

color: red

length: long

other: purple streak

wild, outgoing

youthful, not conservative

adventurous

face

no makeup

natural, young

shirt/blouse/top

bohemian, embroidered shirt

liberal, hippie-ish

pants/skirt/shorts

ripped jeans

casual, easy-going

shoes

motorcycle boots

tough

accessories

nose ring

a little radical

gold locket

old-fashioned, sentimental

body language

eye contact: sporadic

shy, uncomfortable

arms: crossed

annoyed or uncomfortable

legs: shifting from foot to foot

impatient or nervous

miscellaneous:

eyebrows up

expectant

not smiling

serious

actions

biting nails

nervous, stressed

keeps looking in mirror

self-conscious





Writing Skills Packet

Worksheets, Outlines, and Templates

Available in the format below:



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Writing Skills

Linguistic Specificity

Available in the format below:



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Linguistic Specificity

Specific and descriptive writing is the expressive goal. Language impaired children frequently use non-specific words in their speech and in their writing. For example, one of the most common words my students use to express emotion is “upset”. I challenge my students to replace that word with a more specific emotion, such as “disappointed”, “sullen”, “outraged”, or “frustrated”. This straightforward exercise requires students to replace underlined non-specific terms, such as “good” and “people”, with specific adjectives and nouns in sentences. This worksheet lends itself well to group sessions and the classroom, because within group contexts students can hear several variations of replacements, and can evaluate the effectiveness of each. An answer key with multiple possible replacements is included.

Name _____

Date _____

BE SPECIFIC

In the following sentences, cross out the underlined words and replace them with more specific nouns and adjectives:

- 1) At the bakery I started drooling just looking at all the stuff _____.
- 2) I'm getting overwhelmed at school from all the stuff _____ my teachers give me to do.
- 3) On my next trip to Italy, I promise to bring you back some great things _____.
- 4) The people _____ at my job do not make enough money.
- 5) My dad doesn't think I'm putting in enough effort, and his feeling _____ makes me feel bad.
- 6) Weight Watchers is a good thing _____ that helps a lot of people.
- 7) I can't believe she betrayed me and it makes me so upset _____.
- 8) Because my son spent so many hours practicing, his performance at the spring concert was really good _____.
- 9) Being a good _____ parent requires putting your child's needs ahead of your own.
- 10) The movie was so bad _____ that I think I started snoring halfway through.
- 11) Things _____ like "all gay people are crazy" or "all snowboarders have a death wish" perpetuate terrible stereotypes.
- 12) My photos, postcards, train ticket stubs, and matchbooks are truly very important things _____ from my trip to Spain.
- 13) My people _____ helped me feel a lot better during my recovery.
- 14) All that stuff _____ is crammed into my head by my tutor.
- 15) He was really upset _____ when he saw her with his best friend.



BE SPECIFIC—Answer Key

(note: answers provided are suggestions; other answers may suffice)

In the following sentences, cross out the underlined words and replace them with more specific nouns and adjectives:

- 1) At the bakery I started drooling just looking at all the stuff (items, baked goods, pastries).
- 2) I'm getting overwhelmed at school from all the stuff (homework, assignments, work) my teachers give me to do.
- 3) On my next trip to Italy, I promise to bring you back some great things (souvenirs, gifts).
- 4) The people (coworkers, staff, workers) at my job do not make enough money.
- 5) My dad doesn't think I'm putting in enough effort, and his feeling (disappointment, frustration) makes me feel bad.
- 6) Weight Watchers is a good thing (organization, strategy) that helps a lot of people.
- 7) I can't believe she betrayed me and it makes me so upset (sad, broken-hearted).
- 8) Because my son spent so many hours practicing, his performance at the spring concert was really good (entertaining, professional, flawless).
- 9) Being a good (selfless, giving, loving, helpful) parent requires putting your child's needs ahead of your own.
- 10) The movie was so bad (boring, predictable) that I think I started snoring halfway through.
- 11) Things (Statements, Notions) like "all gay people are crazy" or "all snowboarders have a death wish" perpetuate terrible stereotypes.
- 12) My photos, postcards, train ticket stubs, and matchbooks are truly very important things (souvenirs, remembrances) from my trip to Spain.
- 13) My people (friends, family, siblings) helped me feel a lot better during my recovery.
- 14) All that stuff (information, knowledge) is crammed into my head by my tutor.
- 15) He was really upset (sad, angry, humiliated) when he saw her with his best friend.





Writing Skills

Linguistic Flexibility

Using Synonyms

Available in the format below:



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Linguistic Flexibility

Linguistic flexibility is an essential skill for effective writing. This vocabulary task improves students' lexicon while encouraging them to increase their precision when choosing words with which to express themselves. This is a straightforward worksheet requiring students to find multiple synonyms of underlined words within sentences. It provides teachers and therapists the chance to discuss slight variations of meanings across synonyms, and motivates students to use a thesaurus when writing. A sample answer key is included.

Name _____

Date _____

BE FLEXIBLE

Find three synonyms for each underlined word and read the sentences out loud with the replacements:

- 1) The elephant was big. _____
- 2) I loved the movie. _____
- 3) He was really upset. _____
- 4) The doctor gave us some bad news. _____

- 5) We talked for hours. _____
- 6) I can't believe how dirty your room is! _____

- 7) She displayed all the symptoms of the disease. _____

- 8) The mission was carried out with brutal efficiency. _____

- 9) He walked to the corner. _____

- 10) My rich uncle flaunted his lifestyle. (rich) _____
(flaunted) _____
- 11) That car is really beautiful. _____

- 12) You are so sweet! _____
- 13) That dessert is too sweet! _____

- 14) I don't want to argue. _____



BE FLEXIBLE—Answer Key

(note: there are more synonyms that could work)

Find three synonyms for each underlined word and read the sentences out loud with the replacements:

- 1) The elephant was big. tremendous huge gigantic
- 2) I loved the movie. adored enjoyed relished
- 3) He was really upset. disturbed angry agitated
- 4) The doctor gave us some bad news. disturbing horrific upsetting
- 5) We talked for hours. chatted conversed gossiped
- 6) I can't believe how dirty your room is! messy unkempt grungy
- 7) She displayed all the symptoms of the disease. demonstrated showed exhibited
- 8) The mission was carried out with brutal efficiency. harsh vicious severe
- 9) He walked to the corner. strolled marched sauntered
- 10) My rich uncle flaunted his lifestyle. (rich) wealthy loaded
 (flaunted) broadcasted flashed
- 11) That car is really beautiful. exquisite gorgeous sublime
- 12) You are so sweet! kind endearing precious
- 13) That dessert is too sweet! sugary cloying syrupy
- 14) I don't want to argue. fight disagree quarrel



Descriptive Writing

Adjectives and Adverbs

Available in the format below:



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Descriptive Writing: Adjectives and Adverbs

Descriptiveness is essential to good writing. This four-page worksheet begins with a clear discussion of descriptive writing and the use of adjectives, followed by an exercise requiring students to insert adjectives from a given list into various sentences. It goes on to discuss the use of adverbs, followed by examples and various tasks involving the use of different types of adverbs and the flexibility of their placement within sentences. The variety and comprehensiveness of the explanations, examples, and exercises provide students with enough practice to send them on their way toward using adjectives and adverbs to significantly increase the descriptiveness of their writing!

Name _____

Date _____

Descriptive Writing: Using Adjectives and Adverbs

When you write, it's important to be descriptive. Descriptive stories, summaries, analyses, and persuasive essays are more interesting, thereby holding your reader's attention, and provide a clearer picture for your reader.

Using adjectives is a great way to be descriptive. Adjectives describe nouns and give a much more interesting and specific "picture" of people, places, animals, things, events, and concepts. Compare the two tables below:

a table

an old, worn-out, giant wooden table

Directions: Choose one or two of the following adjectives and fit them into each sentence below.

beautiful	ugly	sweet	sour	old	new
broken	shiny	tall	short	fast	slow
square	smooth	clear	interesting	boring	sharp
funny	terrible	fresh	sleek	sad	peculiar
relaxing	nutty	shy	tiny	gentle	scary

- 1) All my friends gathered at the park on the weekend.
- 2) His sister arrived at the airport after her vacation at the beach.
- 3) I like to eat ice cream when I do my homework.
- 4) Henry took the train from his house in the suburbs into the city.
- 5) The squirrel finally found the nut he had buried in the backyard.
- 6) My teacher taught us all about the War of 1812.
- 7) Her coworker read the book throughout the morning.
- 8) The girl in the sandbox played with toys yesterday afternoon.
- 9) People always surround that water fountain near the receptionist.
- 10) In July the cheetah cubs learned how to hunt their prey.



Using adverbs is another great way to be descriptive. Adverbs can describe adjectives or other adverbs, but most often they are used to describe verbs. They can answer the question of how something is done.

Examples: How does Sally swim?

She swims quickly.

How does Tom respond to emails?

He responds to emails efficiently.

Note: *Adverbs that describe verbs frequently end in “ly”, but not always.*

Also: *Adverbs can be placed in different spots in a sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence.*

Example: The boy hesitantly approached the desk.

The boy approached the desk hesitantly.

Directions: Choose adverbs from the following list and fit one into each sentence below to describe the verbs.

quickly	slowly	easily	severely	excitedly	hesitantly
rudely	kindly	sweetly	sadly	happily	angrily
patiently	impatiently	carefully	cautiously	recklessly	confidently
reluctantly	secretly	loudly	quietly	proudly	seriously
well	better	further	more	less	sometimes

- 1) All my friends gathered at the park on the weekend.
- 2) His sister arrived at the airport after her vacation at the beach.
- 3) Anthony hid his mother’s birthday present under his bed.
- 4) Her coworker read the last few pages of her beloved novel late at night.
- 5) Mark worked in the seafood department of the local store.
- 6) Brittany left Pennsylvania to be closer to her family.
- 7) Skeeter ran after the mouse that showed up in our kitchen.
- 8) The teacher worked all weekend on his lesson plans.



There are many adverbs that describe how often an action occurs. Using these adverbs is another way to be more specific, thereby providing your reader with a more detailed description.

Directions: Choose adverbs from the following list and fit one into each sentence below to give your reader an idea of the frequency of an action.

incessantly frequently always usually often regularly
sometimes rarely never infrequently occasionally
once in a blue moon at the drop of a hat hardly ever seldom

- 1) I like to eat ice cream when I do my homework.
- 2) My brother-in-law travels to Alaska in the summer to go fishing.
- 3) Jessie reads historical fiction.
- 4) The health department checks on every school in the five boroughs.
- 5) Bad things happen to good people.
- 6) In New York people are packed like sardines into subway cars.
- 7) My family watches Bob's Burgers together.
- 8) I love to walk through the haunted houses at amusement parks.
- 9) In the winter my friend Ryan and I go ice-skating at our local pond.
- 10) Henry hates to go on long car trips because he gets carsick.

Directions: Now write your own sentence using the following frequency adverbs.

- 1) (occasionally) _____

- 2) (never) _____

- 3) (rarely) _____

- 4) (frequently) _____

- 5) (incessantly) _____

Directions: After circling the frequency adverb, say the following sentences out loud, moving the adverb to a different place in the sentence.

- 1) Occasionally my little sister is able to hold her breath underwater.
- 2) Time can often heal a broken heart.
- 3) My mom can usually bring out the best in me.
- 4) Thomas, who sits next to me in math class, incessantly smacks his gum.
- 5) Frequently, I find my mind wandering during sociology class.
- 6) He never can see the forest for the trees.
- 7) The Supreme Court often makes controversial decisions.
- 8) I will rarely discover that my brother was intentionally being unkind.
- 9) Sometimes Susan spends more money at the mall than she meant to.
- 10) Once in a blue moon I'll indulge in an ice cream sundae.



Writing Skills

Redundancy

Available in the format below:



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Redundancy

Learning to avoid redundancy means learning to express yourself clearly and concisely. I've found that this straightforward worksheet involves several tasks integral to avoiding redundancy. Following a brief written discussion on redundancy, students are tasked with finding redundant components within several given sentences. Students learn to first break down and analyze meanings within each sentence. Then, after identifying the redundant elements within each sentence, they must choose which to omit and which to keep, depending upon which, if any, gives more specific information. They must also be on the lookout for self-evident information that should be omitted. This worksheet, therefore, works on the writing skill of avoiding redundancy along with the receptive language skill of breaking sentences down semantically. An answer key is included.

Name _____

Date _____

What is Redundancy?

Redundancy is when you provide information that you've already provided. You don't need to say something more than once. Examples: "My math teacher teaches us math." (repeats form)

"My door is always open, it's never closed." (repeats meaning)

(Note: *For certain situations some repetition may be used for emphasis. This kind of repetition is more appropriate for verbal expression than for written expression.*)

Directions: The following sentences contain redundancies. Choose which redundant information to cross out.

- 1) The small, little dog ran across the street.
- 2) The small, little ladybug flew out the window into the outside.
- 3) We were surprised by the unexpected knock on the door.
- 4) I first saw him when he was an adult one-year-old dog.
- 5) Veronica and I have been friends since we were little, way back in first grade.
- 6) She is so beautiful and pretty everyone says she is stunning.
- 7) Obama, our president, spoke Tuesday night at an 8 p.m. press conference.
- 8) At Summit we're not increasing the enrollment of our school or adding more students.
- 9) Last summer Mark traveled to China and spent the entire month of July in the city of Shanghai.
- 10) Every time I sneeze people always jump because my sneezes are so loud.
- 11) Anthony was the first serious boyfriend I had in my whole life.
- 12) My global history teacher was talking yesterday about the end of World War II and how Japan had to have its constitution rewritten after the war was over.

What is Redundancy? – Answer Key

Redundancy is when you provide information that you've already provided. You don't need to say something more than once. Examples: "My math teacher teaches us math." (repeats form)

"My door is always open, it's never closed" (repeats meaning)

(Note: *For certain situations some repetition may be used for emphasis. This kind of repetition is more appropriate for verbal expression than for written expression.*)

Directions: The following sentences contain redundancies. Choose which redundant information to cross out. **Note:** *After student identifies redundant words/phrases, it is important to choose to leave in whichever words/phrases are more specific, thereby providing the most information.* For examples, see sentences #4 and #5.

- 1) The small dog ran across the street. *Since "small" and "little" have the exact same meaning, students can eliminate either.*
- 2) The ladybug flew out the window. *All ladybugs are small, so neither "small" nor "little" is needed.*
- 3) We were surprised by the knock on the door.
- 4) I first saw him when he was a one-year-old dog. *Students should keep in "one-year-old" since it provides more information than "adult".*
- 5) Veronica and I have been friends since way back in first grade. *"In first grade" is more specific than when "we were little".*
- 6) She is so beautiful everyone says she is stunning. *The adjective "beautiful" more accurately matches the adjective "stunning".*
- 7) Obama spoke Tuesday at an 8 p.m. press conference.
- 8) At Summit we're not increasing the enrollment of our school.
- 9) Last summer Mark traveled to China and spent July in Shanghai. *"Spent July" implies he spent the whole month there. It's debatable whether "traveled to China" is needed, since spending a month in Shanghai could imply that he travelled to get there.*
- 10) My sneezes are so loud they always make people jump. *This sentence benefits from rewording.*
- 11) Anthony was my first serious boyfriend.
- 12) My global history teacher was talking yesterday about how Japan had to have its constitution rewritten at the end of World War II. *Of course, if a student said this to anyone familiar with his class schedule, he could probably leave out "global history", since it would be fairly obvious which teacher made the statement.*



Writing Skills

Clarity and Simplification

Available in the format below:



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Clarity and Simplification

So many middle school and high school students struggle to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and concisely. These three worksheet pages allow students to work on simplifying sentences, thereby improving the clarity and precision of their writing. Students learn that extra words do not always add meaning. These tasks also help students improve their comprehension, since simplifying requires an analysis of meanings. Answer keys are included.

Name _____

Date _____

Say It Simply, Clearly, and Directly

Simplify the following sentences:

- 1) School is the place where I met Sally who is my girlfriend.

- 2) Last week and the week before and the week before that I went surfing.

- 3) On the day after tomorrow I'll visit him.

- 4) On the top of the page, but not in the middle, on the right side, up in the corner draw a circle.

- 5) She hit him in the head and the blow was so hard that he fell down and she didn't mean to do it, it was just an accident.

- 6) My math teacher gave me a grade that was so low it was a fail.

- 7) My oldest brother and my second-oldest brother took me to the park.

- 8) I ran into the woman who babysits my little sister named Caroline.

- 9) Every time I always arrive on time for my job where I work.

- 10) Draw a small circle, very small, it's the same size as a fruit, like a cherry.



11) Along the side of the street, look to the left, that's where you will see the International House of Pancakes.

12) Meet me where Main Street and Maple Drive cross each other.

13) Go down to the end of the block and at the corner that's where you need to make a right turn.

14) After you finish that sandwich you are eating let's you and me go for a walk because it is spring and it is such a beautiful day.

15) Right in the middle, not the end or the beginning, of this week I want you to call me on my phone.



Say It Simply, Clearly, and Directly—Answer Key

Simplify the following phrases and sentences:

- 1) I met my girlfriend Sally at school.
- 2) For the past three weeks I went surfing.
- 3) (Name the day, i.e., Wednesday) I'll visit him.
- 4) In the top right corner draw a circle.
- 5) She accidentally hit him in the head so hard that he fell down.
- 6) My math teacher gave me a failing grade.
- 7) My two oldest brothers took me to the park.
- 8) I ran into Caroline, my little sister's babysitter.
- 9) I always arrive on time for my job.
- 10) Draw a small circle the size of a cherry.
- 11) On the left side of the street you will see the International House of Pancakes.
- 12) Meet me at the corner of Main Street and Maple Drive.
- 13) Go down to the end of the block and turn right.
- 14) After you finish that sandwich let's go for a walk because it is such a beautiful spring day.
- 15) Call me in the middle of the week.

Name _____

Date _____

Say It Simply, Clearly, and Directly—2

Simplify the following sentences:

- 1) That baby kitten isn't able to find the place where his food bowl is.

- 2) At the time that you will be in Alaska you will then notice that there is ice that is blue.

- 3) When it is Monday morning, every Monday, I open my jar and fill it to the top with chocolates to give to my students.

- 4) I've tried and tried, but I can't figure out how to solve that puzzle.

- 5) The school where I was in high school at is in Alabama.

- 6) The character who is my favorite one is named Charlie.

- 7) The subject in school that I was the worst at was the history of the world.

- 8) I used to have a dog, but then he died, and ever since his death I'm heartbroken.

- 9) I've tried carrots cooked but I only like them when they're raw.

- 10) The teacher I have who teaches us about psychology is fantastic.

Say It Simply, Clearly, and Directly—2

Answer Key

Simplify the following sentences:

- 1) That kitten can't find his food bowl.
- 2) When you're in Alaska you'll see blue ice.
- 3) Every Monday morning I fill my jar with chocolates for my students.
- 4) I just can't solve that puzzle.
- 5) I went to high school in Alabama.
- 6) Charlie is my favorite character.
- 7) Global history was my worst subject.
- 8) Ever since my dog's death I'm heartbroken.
- 9) I like raw carrots, not cooked.
- 10) My psychology teacher is fantastic.





Writing Skills

Adding Meaning

Simplify and Elaborate

Available in the format below:



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Adding Meaning: Simplify and Elaborate

One of my favorite writing skills exercises! Your students will actually enjoy working on their language skills with this activity! Middle school and high school students learn that extra words do not always equal extra meaning, all while improving the descriptiveness and specificity of their writing. The worksheet begins with an example sentence: *I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage*, and then points out that all this means is I took my dog to the park. The next example is another long sentence about taking a dog to the park, but this one is packed with meaning, including descriptions of the dog, the park, the walk, and the day. For the writing exercise, students are tasked with simplifying other lengthy, comically complicated sentences down to the contained meanings, and then they roll a die to find out which elements (including adjectives, adverbs, places, times, more descriptive verbs, and more specific nouns) they must add to their simplified sentences. Included is an answer key that incorporates therapeutic notes.

Name _____

Date _____

Sentence Simplification and Elaboration

Directions: First, simplify the sentence.

Next, elaborate on the sentence: roll die and follow the chart below to add to sentence.

- 1) Adjective
- 2) Adverb
- 3) Descriptive verb
- 4) Specific noun
- 5) Time
- 6) Place

Example

Sentence: I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage.

Simplification: I took my dog to the park.

Elaboration: I strolled to the giant park at the end of my block with my faithful Golden Retriever on a snowy, winter morning.

Sentences

- 1) The man that married my mother after my parents got divorced entered my sleeping compartment to make me transition from an R.E.M. state into consciousness in order so that I could transport myself to my learning institution.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die once)

Elaborate: (roll die twice more)



Sentence Simplification and Elaboration (cont.)

- 2) The feline companion that lives with me in my domicile exited said domicile and since the time of the exit I have been unable to locate said feline.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

- 3) The individual who instructs my classmates and myself in the strategies of number addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division was not present at the institution of instruction yesterday because his heterosexual domestic partner was procreating.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

- 4) While traveling by means of underground transportation the receptacle that contains my toiletries, my currency, and my portable communication device was illegally confiscated by an unknown perpetrator.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die 3 times)

- 5) The guy that I am monogamously, romantically involved with accompanied me on a recreational excursion to the 50th state of the United States of America for the nationally enforced respite celebrating the resurrection of the Christian religion's savior.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die 4 times)

Write your own simple sentence: _____

Elaborate: (roll die twice)



Sentence Simplification and Elaboration – Answer Key

(Note: will need a die) **Directions:** First, simplify the sentence. Next, elaborate on the sentence: roll die and follow the chart below to add to sentence.

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1) Adjective | 2) Adverb | 3) Descriptive verb |
| 4) Specific noun | 5) Time | 6) Place |

Example

Sentence: I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage.

Simplification: I took my dog to the park.

Elaboration: I strolled to the giant park at the end of my block with my faithful Golden Retriever on a snowy, winter morning.

Note: It is very important to point out here to your students that the original sentence and the elaborated sentence are almost exactly the same length (in fact the original is slightly longer), and yet the elaborated sentence is chock full of extra meaning: how I walked, the size of the park, the location of the park, the breed of the dog, a description of the dog's personality, the weather, the season, and the time of day!

Sentences

- 1) The man that married my mother after my parents got divorced entered my sleeping compartment to make me transition from an R.E.M. state into consciousness in order so that I could transport myself to my learning institution.

Simplify: My stepfather woke me for school.

Elaborate: (roll die once)

For example, if a student rolled a one, she would need to add an adjective, and could write: My organized stepfather woke me for school.

Elaborate: (roll die two more times)

For example, if she then rolled a two and a five, she would need to add an adverb and a time, and could write: My organized stepfather gently woke me for school at a quarter to eight.

Note: Not all rolls will fit all sentences. For example, the verb “woke” is very straightforward and cannot be replaced by a more descriptive verb. In these cases, simply have the student roll again. Some rolls can be repeated. For example, a student can add more than one adjective to one sentence.

- 2) The feline companion that lives with me in my domicile exited said domicile and since the time of the exit I have been unable to locate said feline.

Simplify: I lost my cat.

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

- 3) The individual who instructs my classmates and myself in the strategies of number addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division was not present at the institution of instruction yesterday because his heterosexual domestic partner was procreating.

Simplify: My math teacher missed school yesterday because his wife had a baby.

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

- 4) While traveling by means of underground transportation the receptacle that contains my toiletries, my currency, and my portable communication device was illegally confiscated by an unknown perpetrator.

Simplify: My purse was stolen on the subway.

Elaborate: (roll die 4 times)

- 5) The guy that I am monogamously, romantically involved with accompanied me on a recreational excursion to the 50th state of the United States of America for the nationally enforced respite celebrating the resurrection of the Christian religion's savior.

Simplify: My boyfriend and I went to Hawaii for spring break.

Elaborate: (roll die 4 times)

Write your own simple sentence: _____

Elaborate: (roll die twice)





Written Elaboration

Answering Homework Questions

Available in the format below:



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Written Elaboration: Answering Questions

I developed this handout after the educational supervisor at my high school, for whom I have tremendous respect, shared her insight with me: perhaps some of our students are not comprehensively answering their homework questions because they don't know what amount of content is sufficient, not because they're not able to be comprehensive. This handout includes a discussion on the importance of elaborating and a rating scale for different answers to the same question. Middle school and high school students learn to distinguish between extra words and extra meaning, and learn to more fully answer homework and test questions.

Name _____

Date _____

Written Elaboration

Your teachers want you to **elaborate** when you are answering homework questions. They want to make sure that you understand the material.

Your teachers want you to **elaborate** when you are writing essays. They want to hear your descriptions, listen to your arguments supporting your opinions, and understand your thoughts.

Rate the elaboration of the following responses on a scale from 1-10.

(10 is best)

Note: To elaborate does not mean to increase the number of words (the length of the response), but rather to increase the number of relevant ideas and the level of complexity of those ideas.

Given a Global History homework question: **Why did Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany become allies during World War II?**

Responses:

_____ Similar ideas.

_____ They had similar ideologies.

_____ Italy and Germany became allies during World War II because they had very similar ideologies.

_____ Italy and Germany became allies during the second World War which took place during the 1940's because although their ideologies went by different names ("Fascism" in Italy, "Nazism" in Germany, and "Militarism" in Japan), they were actually very similar.

_____ Italy and Germany became allies during World War II because their ideologies were very similar, and because they wanted to preserve their nations.

_____ Italy and Germany became allies during World War II for several reasons, including the similarity of their ideologies, their sense of nationalism and desire for power, and their view that the alliance could be a means of obtaining territory.





Writing Skills

Transition Words & Phrases

Available in the format below:



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Transition Words and Phrases

This writing skills worksheet targets the abilities to both comprehend and express the semantic relationship between ideas. Understanding how two ideas are related is integral to grasping the big picture. *Transition Words and Phrases* begins with a reference sheet that reinforces students' understanding of the following conceptual relationships: time, comparison, contrast, emphasis, conclusion, addition of information, clarification, and causality, while providing sample words and phrases that express those relationships. The three-page worksheet that follows presents two tasks. First, students are given the relationship between pairs of ideas and must combine those ideas using transition words and phrases from the reference sheet. Second, students must identify the relationship between more pairs of ideas before providing transition words and phrases to combine the ideas. *Transition Words and Phrases* increases students' awareness of conceptual relationships and provides them with straightforward practice expressing those relationships.

Name _____

Date _____

Transition Words and Phrases Reference Sheet

Choose your transitions based on the relationship between two ideas presented. Figure out what the second idea is doing in relation to the first, and use a transition for that type of relationship. Here are some examples of transitions for different relationships:

Shows Time

first second third then last soon later next while after afterward
during now until meanwhile finally as soon as suddenly before

Compares Ideas (how they are alike)

like likewise also as while similarly in the same way as well

Contrasts Ideas (how they are different)

but however still yet although otherwise in contrast nevertheless
on the other hand even though while

Emphasizes a Point

again truly especially to repeat in fact to emphasize to highlight

Concludes or Summarizes

finally lastly as shown to sum up all in all in conclusion to conclude

Adds Information

again also as well next another and besides for instance for example
moreover along with in addition additionally other plus

Clarifies

in other words for instance that is specifically to clarify

Shows Causality

therefore because consequently as a consequence so since as a result

Name _____

Date _____

Transition Words and Phrases

Examples within Sentences

Directions: Notice the relationship between each pair of ideas.
Choose your transition words and phrases from the samples.

Shows Time

- 1) In the morning I brush my teeth _____ I take a shower.
- 2) Sam saw Melanie in the coffee shop one morning. _____ she passed him by on her way to class.

Compares Ideas (how they are alike)

- 1) The world is a big place; _____ a new student can get lost at school.
- 2) I love to draw _____ my brother loves to create giant oil paintings.

Contrasts Ideas (how they are different)

- 1) The world is a big place; _____ you can feel safe with your circle of friends.
- 2) I love to draw _____ my brother hates art classes.

Emphasizes a Point

- 1) We all experience at least some heartache mixed in with the joy in life.
_____ no one gets through life without getting hurt.
- 2) I've been looking for him my whole life; _____ he's the one!

Concludes or Summarizes

- 1) _____, these are all the reasons to support solar energy.
- 2) _____, don't leave home without your phone charger.

Adds Information

- 1) The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval.
_____, historians regard the Revolution as one of the most important events in human history.
- 2) I didn't want to go to the party. _____ my favorite movie was on television that night.

Clarifies

- 1) The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval.
_____, there were many changes occurring in both French society and government during that time.
- 2) I didn't want to go to the party. _____, I knew Tom would be there and I didn't want to see him until we could resolve our issues.

Shows Causality

- 1) The food truck won't be here at all this week. _____ I'm going to have to pack a bag lunch for myself every day.
- 2) Yesterday I ran into an old friend from high school, so we went out for lunch and had a great time. _____ I've decided to do a better job of keeping in touch with my old friends.

Directions: For the following, first identify the relationship between each pair of ideas, and then combine each pair of ideas using a chosen transition word or phrase.

- 1) Sara lived 500 miles away from her family. She couldn't make it home for the holidays.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 2) Every Sunday night Tom chooses his clothes for work the next day. He packs a bag lunch and puts it into the refrigerator.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 3) When I get home my dog always greets me, barking and licking my face. My cat can't be bothered.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____



- 4) Henry needed a vacation. He booked his flight to Cancun, packed his bag, and found someone who could look after his cat while he was away.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 5) Henry needed a vacation. He had been working 60-hour weeks and was so stressed that he couldn't sleep at night.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 6) The open-air market was filled with so many different sounds: the clinking of coins, children shouting, the vendors ringing bells. When I entered the museum, you could hear a pin drop.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 7) Cheetahs are typically solitary animals; while males sometimes live with their brothers, females raise cubs by themselves for one year. My uncle Bill has lived alone his whole adult life and says he prefers to be by himself.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 8) My neighbor's daughter doesn't like cake, pie, ice cream, candy, chocolate, or even sugary cereals. She just doesn't have a sweet tooth.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____



Transition Words and Phrases

Examples within Sentences

Answer Key

(Note: these are sample answers – many are possible)

Directions: Notice the relationship between each pair of ideas.
Choose your transition words and phrases from the samples.

Shows Time

- 1) In the morning I brush my teeth before I take a shower.
- 2) Sam saw Melanie in the coffee shop one morning. Later she passed him by on her way to class.

Compares Ideas (how they are alike)

- 1) The world is a big place; likewise a new student can get lost at school.
- 2) I love to draw in the same way my brother loves to create giant oil paintings.

Contrasts Ideas (how they are different)

- 1) The world is a big place; however you can feel safe with your circle of friends.
- 2) I love to draw even though my brother hates art classes.

Emphasizes a Point

- 1) We all experience at least some heartache mixed in with the joy in life. In fact no one gets through life without getting hurt.
- 2) I've been looking for him my whole life; truly he's the one!

Concludes or Summarizes

- 1) Finally, these are all the reasons to support solar energy.
- 2) In conclusion, don't leave home without your phone charger.

Adds Information

- 1) The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval. Moreover, historians regard the Revolution as one of the most important events in human history.
- 2) I didn't want to go to the party. Additionally, my favorite movie was on television that night.

Clarifies

- 1) The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval. In other words, there were many changes occurring in both French society and government during that time.
- 2) I didn't want to go to the party. To clarify, I knew Tom would be there and I didn't want to see him until we could resolve our issues.

Shows Causality

- 1) The food truck won't be here at all this week. Therefore I'm going to have to pack a bag lunch for myself every day.
- 2) Yesterday I ran into an old friend from high school, so we went out for lunch and had a great time. As a result, I've decided to do a better job of keeping in touch with my old friends.

Directions: For the following, first identify the relationship between each pair of ideas, and then combine each pair of ideas using a chosen transition word or phrase.

(Note: some of these can convey more than one type of relationship, and there are many ways to combine each pair of ideas. Sample answers are given)

- 1) Sara lived 500 miles away from her family. She couldn't make it home for the holidays.
Type of relationship: Shows Causality
Combine ideas using transition: Sara couldn't make it home for the holidays since she lived 500 miles away from her family.
- 2) Every Sunday night Tom chooses his clothes for work the next day. He packs a bag lunch and puts it into the refrigerator.
Type of relationship: Shows Time
Combine ideas using transition: Every Sunday night Tom chooses his clothes for work the next day. Afterward, he packs a bag lunch and puts it into the refrigerator.
- 3) When I get home my dog always greets me, barking and licking my face. My cat can't be bothered.
Type of relationship: Contrasts Ideas
Combine ideas using transition: When I get home my dog always greets me, barking and licking my face; in contrast, my cat can't be bothered.

- 4) Henry needed a vacation. He booked his flight to Cancun, packed his bag, and found someone who could look after his cat while he was away.

Type of relationship: Shows Time

Combine ideas using transition: Henry needed a vacation. Finally, he booked his flight to Cancun, packed his bag, and found someone who could look after his cat while he was away.

- 5) Henry needed a vacation. He had been working 60-hour weeks and was so stressed that he couldn't sleep at night.

Type of relationship: Shows Causality

Combine ideas using transition: Henry needed a vacation since he had been working 60-hour weeks and was so stressed that he couldn't sleep at night.

- 6) The open-air market was filled with so many different sounds: the clinking of coins, children shouting, the vendors ringing bells. When I entered the museum, you could hear a pin drop.

Type of relationship: Contrasts Ideas

Combine ideas using transition: The open-air market was filled with so many different sounds: the clinking of coins, children shouting, the vendors ringing bells. On the other hand, when I entered the museum, you could hear a pin drop.

- 7) Cheetahs are typically solitary animals; while males sometimes live with their brothers, females raise cubs by themselves for one year. My uncle Bill has lived alone his whole adult life and says he prefers to be by himself.

Type of relationship: Compares Ideas

Combine ideas using transition: Cheetahs are typically solitary animals; while males sometimes live with their brothers, females raise cubs by themselves for one year. Similarly, my uncle Bill has lived alone his whole adult life and says he prefers to be by himself.

- 8) My neighbor's daughter doesn't like cake, pie, ice cream, candy, chocolate, or even sugary cereals. She just doesn't have a sweet tooth.

Type of relationship: Clarifies

Combine ideas using transition: My neighbor's daughter doesn't like cake, pie, ice cream, candy, chocolate, or even sugary cereals. Specifically, she just doesn't have a sweet tooth.



Writing Skills

Perspective Consistency

Available in the format below:



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Perspective Consistency

One of the most common mistakes I see in my students' writing, especially in their persuasive essays, is perspective inconsistency. They will start off writing to the general "you", such as in "roller coasters give you a feeling of fun", and then switch to "one", such as in "because one's body releases endorphins", and may switch again to "we", as in "and that is why we love roller coasters!" This activity works directly on perspective consistency by requiring students to choose a perspective, and then stick to it by modifying a given essay. After students make their modifications in writing and we have reviewed their word choices, I like to give them extra practice by having them read the essay aloud, changing nouns, pronouns, and verbs accordingly, after choosing a second perspective.

Name _____

Date _____

Perspective Consistency

It is important to keep your perspective consistent in your writing. Switching perspectives is one of the most common writing mistakes. When writing a persuasive essay, decide which perspective you want to use. **Then stick to it.**

Directions: The following persuasive essay has inconsistent perspectives. Choose one of the perspectives below. Then cross out all nouns or pronouns inconsistent with the perspective you've chosen and replace them with consistent nouns and pronouns.

(Note: also change corresponding verbs and nouns as needed.)

(Also: keep the first two sentences intact as they provide background facts preceding any opinions.)

- I, me, my, mine, myself
- you, your, yours, yourself, (yourselves--if implying the general "you")
- teenagers, they, their, theirs, them, themselves
- teenagers, we, our, ours, us, ourselves

A new technology, Global Positioning System (GPS), which allows parents to track down their children, has caused a little controversy. Using GPS, parents would be able to pinpoint their kids' location, sometimes without the kid even knowing. This new technology has caused a controversy because teenagers may not want to have your parents tracking oneself like some escaped pet, and it may make you feel that one's parents may not completely trust you. But your parents may feel that it is by all means necessary, as the parents may think it could help them if I was lost or in some sort of danger.

There is an old saying that goes "it's better to be safe than sorry", which may apply to the use of tracking devices in teens' cell phones. You may feel like it is an invasion of privacy, but what if, for example, one was kidnapped, lost, or stuck in a bad part of a town? All of those situations are much bigger problems than just having my parents knowing where I am. Your parents will be able to help you if one finds oneself in any of those situations.

One must consider how one's parents may feel about having no idea where you are. Some may say that using a GPS to track my whereabouts is spying, and that it shows that your parents don't trust you, but one must also consider that perhaps you're not so trustworthy in the first place. I may be going to a place where my parents told me not to go, a place where you may be in danger. If one is going out and your parents are expecting you to call by a certain time, and you don't, and one isn't responding to calls or text messages, then my parents could use the tracking device to find out where I am.

Another advantage of having a tracking device in my cell phone involves peer pressure. If, for example, your friends are pressuring you to go somewhere you don't want to go to do something that one doesn't want to do, I could just say "I can't because my parents are tracking me through my cell phone". One could avoid looking "uncool" or "afraid" by using the excuse that you can't go only because your parents would find out. Teenagers will often respect the "I'll get in trouble with my parents" excuse.

Finally, if you're not going anywhere you're not supposed to be, than why would one mind one's parents knowing where one is? There are several important advantages to my parents using a GPS to track me, and my safety is chief among them. Who knows—maybe when one is an adult and has elderly parents who are at risk, you will want to track your parents using a GPS to make sure they stay safe!



Perspective Consistency—Answer Key

Answer Sample: Perspective of teenagers, they, their, theirs, them, themselves

A new technology, Global Positioning System (GPS), which allows parents to track down their children, has caused a little controversy. Using GPS, parents would be able to pinpoint their kids' location, sometimes without the kid even knowing. This new technology has caused a controversy because teenagers may not want to have **their (your)** parents tracking **them (oneself)** like some escaped pet, and it may make **them (you)** feel that **their (one's)** parents may not completely trust **them (you)**. But **their (your)** parents may feel that it is by all means necessary, as the parents may think it could help them if **their teenager (I)** was lost or in some sort of danger.

There is an old saying that goes “it’s better to be safe than sorry”, which may apply to the use of tracking devices in teens’ cell phones. **Teenagers (You)** may feel like it is an invasion of privacy, but what if, for example, **they were (one was)** kidnapped, lost, or stuck in a bad part of a town? All of those situations are much bigger problems than just having **their (my)** parents knowing where **they are (I am)**. **Their (Your)** parents will be able to help **them (you)** if they find **themselves (one finds oneself)** in any of those situations.

Teenagers (One) must consider how **their (one's)** parents may feel about having no idea where **they (you)** are. Some may say that using a GPS to track **teenagers' (my)** whereabouts is spying, and that it shows that **their (your)** parents don't trust **them (you)**, but **they (one)** must also consider that perhaps **they're (you're)** not so trustworthy in the first place. **They (I)** may be going to a place where **their (my)** parents told **them (me)** not to go, a place where **they (you)** may be in danger. If **teenagers are (one is)** going out and **their (your)** parents are expecting **them (you)** to call by a certain time, and **they (you)** don't, and **they aren't (one isn't)** responding to calls or text messages, then **their (my)** parents could use the tracking device to find out where **they are (I am)**.



Another advantage of having a tracking device in **their (my)** cell phones involves peer pressure. If, for example, **their (your)** friends are pressuring **them (you)** to go somewhere **they (you)** don't want to go to do something that **they don't (one doesn't)** want to do, **they (I)** could just say "I can't because my parents are tracking me through my cell phone". **Teenagers (One)** could avoid looking "uncool" or "afraid" by using the excuse that **they (you)** can't go only because **their (your)** parents would find out. **Other teenagers** will often respect the "I'll get in trouble with my parents" excuse. *(Note: I have found most of my students do not understand the main idea of this paragraph. I always check to make sure they've understood the point made before moving on.)*

Finally, if **teenagers are (you're)** not going anywhere **they're (you're)** not supposed to be, than why would **they (one)** mind **their (one's)** parents knowing where **they are (one is)**? There are several important advantages to **their (my)** parents using a GPS to track **them (me)**, and **their (my)** safety is chief among them. Who knows—maybe when **they are adults (one is an adult)** and **have (has)** elderly parents who are at risk, **they (you)** will want to track **their (your)** parents using a GPS to make sure **their parents (they)** stay safe!





Writing Skills

Passive and Active Voice

Available in the format below:



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Passive and Active Voice

Using the active voice is such an important skill for strong and effective writing. Unfortunately, very few students seem to know about the difference between passive and active voice. This worksheet begins with a clear explanation and discussion of active and passive voice, and follows with two brief exercises, the first requiring the identification of voice and the second requiring the transformation of voice within sentences from passive to active while retaining all the meaning. An answer key is included.

Name _____

Date _____

Passive/Active Voice

Sentences are characterized as being “passive” or “active”.

We say they are “in passive voice” or “in active voice”.

In active voice, something is doing something to something. Examples of active voice:

The dog chased the cat.

I swallow the pill every day.

Lucy finished the marathon.

In passive voice, something is having something done to it. Examples of passive voice:

The cat was chased by the dog.

The pill is swallowed by me every day.

The marathon was finished by Lucy.

Why is it important to identify whether a sentence is in the passive or active voice?

It's important because most of the time you should write in the active voice! Active voice sentences make your writing sound strong.

Of course, sometimes using passive voice sentences is the better choice. For example, the first sentence on this worksheet could be characterized as passive. The active version: “Being passive or active characterizes sentences” sounds awkward.

But most of the time: write in the active voice!

Directions: Identify the following sentences as passive (P) or active (A).

_____ The boy was followed by the goat.

_____ The goat followed the boy.

_____ The bee stung the baby.

_____ My cat always scratches our dining room table.

_____ When I was little, my brothers tickled me every chance they got.

_____ The next song will be sung by a newcomer to our stage.

_____ I finished all the homework that my teachers assigned me.

_____ We ate every cookie in the house.

_____ Feta cheese, pita, hummus, and pears were the foods always bought by Henry.

Directions: Change the following sentences from passive to active without losing or changing the meaning.

All the balls were thrown by the girl. _____

The table was cut in half by that man. _____

My favorite book was written by Margaret Atwood. _____

A little mouse was let go by the kind lion. _____

My heart was broken by a smooth talker. _____



Passive/Active Voice—Answer Key

Sentences are characterized as being “passive” or “active”.

We say they are “in passive voice” or “in active voice”.

In active voice, something is doing something to something. Examples of active voice:

The dog chased the cat.

I swallow the pill every day.

Lucy finished the marathon.

In passive voice, something is having something done to it. Examples of passive voice:

The cat was chased by the dog.

The pill is swallowed by me every day.

The marathon was finished by Lucy.

Why is it important to identify whether a sentence is in the passive or active voice?

It's important because **most of the time you should write in the active voice! Active voice sentences make your writing sound strong.**

Of course, sometimes using passive voice sentences is the better choice. For example, the first sentence on this worksheet could be characterized as passive. The active version: “Being passive or active characterizes sentences” sounds awkward.

But most of the time: **write in the active voice!**

Directions: Identify the following sentences as passive (P) or active (A).

 P The boy was followed by the goat.

 A The goat followed the boy.

 A The bee stung the baby.

 A My cat always scratches our dining room table.

 A When I was little, my brothers tickled me every chance they got.

 P The next song will be sung by a newcomer to our stage.

 A I finished all the homework that my teachers assigned me.

 A We ate every cookie in the house.

 P Feta cheese, pita, hummus, and pears were the foods always bought by Henry.

Directions: Change the following sentences from passive to active without losing or changing the meaning.

All the balls were thrown by the girl. The girl threw all the balls.

The table was cut in half by that man. That man cut the table in half.

My favorite book was written by Margaret Atwood. Margaret Atwood wrote my favorite book.

A little mouse was let go by the kind lion. The kind lion let a little mouse go.

My heart was broken by a smooth talker. A smooth talker broke my heart.



Writing Skills

Character Descriptions

Available in the format below:



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Character Descriptions

This writing activity is user-friendly for both students and teachers/tutors/speech language pathologists. It not only teaches students how to write a sophisticated and comprehensive character description essay, but also shows students how they can infer information about a character's personality and perspective from that character's actions and dialogue. Given a short novel excerpt, students are first tasked with attributing adjectives to one of the characters by analyzing his actions and words, and then they use those adjectives to write a character description by following a written scaffold. This strategy and scaffold can apply to almost any character analysis writing assignment. Included are extensive notes on the provided excerpt and a sample character analysis essay following the scaffold to aid in instruction.

Name _____

Date _____

Novel Excerpt from *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes

Background: Louisa and Patrick live in England and are girlfriend and boyfriend. Louisa has just lost her job and is looking for some sympathy from Patrick.

Excerpt:

He was down at the athletics club, as I had known he would be Mondays to Thursdays, regular as a station timetable, Patrick was there in the gym or running in circles around the floodlit track.

“Run with me,” he puffed, as he got closer. His breath came in pale clouds. “I’ve got four laps to go.”

“I wasn’t expecting you.”

“I got fed up at home. I thought maybe we could do something.”

He looked sideways at me. There was a fine film of sweat on his face. “The sooner you get another job, babe, the better.”

“It’s all of twenty-four hours since I lost the last one. Am I allowed to just be a bit miserable and floppy? You know, just for today?”

“But you’ve got to look at the positive side. You knew you couldn’t stay at that place forever. You want to move upward, onward.” Patrick had been named Stortfold Young Entrepreneur of the Year two years previously, and had not yet quite recovered from the honor. . . . “Being made redundant can change people’s lives, Lou.” He glanced at his watch, checking his lap time. “What do you want to do? You could retrain. I’m sure they do a grant for people like you.”

“People like me?”

“People looking for a new opportunity. What do you want to be? You could be a beautician. You’re pretty enough.” He nudged me as we ran, as if I should be grateful for the compliment.

“You know my beauty routine. Soap, water, the odd paper bag.”

Patrick was beginning to look exasperated.

I was starting to lag behind. I hate running. I hated him for not slowing down.

Notes for Novel Excerpt from *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes

Background: Louisa and Patrick live in England and are girlfriend and boyfriend. Louisa has just lost her job and is looking for some sympathy from Patrick. ***Here you can discuss perspective taking by examining Louisa's point of view.***

Excerpt:

He was down at the athletics club, as I had known he would be Mondays to Thursdays, regular as a station timetable, ***(discuss meaning of "regular as a station timetable")***

Patrick was there in the gym or running in circles around the floodlit track. (rigid)

"Run with me," he puffed, as he got closer. His breath came in pale clouds. "I've got four laps to go." (rigid/inflexible)

"I wasn't expecting you."

"I got fed up at home. I thought maybe we could do something."

He looked sideways at me. There was a fine film of sweat on his face. "The sooner you get another job, babe, the better." (unsympathetic/pushy)

"It's all of twenty-four hours since I lost the last one. Am I allowed to just be a bit miserable and floppy? You know, just for today?" ***(Discuss how she's looking for a little sympathy, how she's asking for a little time to feel sorry for herself.)***

(unsympathetic/insensitive) "But you've got to look at the positive side. You knew you couldn't stay at that place forever. You want to move upward, onward." Patrick had been named Stortfold Young Entrepreneur ***(define "entrepreneur")*** of the Year two years previously, and had not yet quite recovered from the honor. ***(Discuss what "not yet quite recovered from the honor" means)*** (egotistical/conceited) ... "Being made redundant can change people's lives, Lou." He glanced at his watch, checking his lap time. (rigid) "What do you want to do? You could retrain. I'm sure they do a grant for people like you." (condescending)

"People like me?"

"People looking for a new opportunity. What do you want to be? You could be a beautician. You're pretty enough." He nudged me as we ran, as if I should be grateful for the compliment. (condescending)

"You know my beauty routine. Soap, water, the odd paper bag." ***(Discuss what Louisa means by this, and what it reveals about her character.)***

Patrick was beginning to look exasperated. (impatient/unsympathetic)

I was starting to lag behind. I hate running. I hated him for not slowing down. (rigid/unyielding/uncaring)



Name _____

Date _____

Analyzing Literature: Character Description

Directions: Write a paragraph in which you comprehensively describe a literary character (Note: Being “comprehensive” means giving a good amount of information. Go into some depth with your analysis.)

Start with:

“In the excerpt from the novel _____ by _____,
(title) (author)
_____ is depicted as _____,
(character’s name) (adjective) (adjective)
and _____.”
(adjective)

Continue with:

“One example of _____’s _____ is when/how ...”
(name) (adjective turned into noun)
(be comprehensive!)

“This demonstrates/reveals/shows ...” *(be comprehensive)*

“An example of his/her _____ is when/how ...”
(adjective turned into noun)
(be comprehensive)

“This demonstrates/reveals/shows ...” *(be comprehensive)*

“Lastly, an example of his/her _____ is when/how”
(adjective turned into noun)
(be you-know-what)

“This demonstrates/reveals/shows ...” *(you know the drill!)*



Analyzing Literature: Character Description Sample

Write a paragraph in which you comprehensively describe a literary character.

Start with:

In the excerpt from the novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes, Patrick is depicted as rigid, egotistical, and condescending.

Continue with:

One example of Patrick's rigidity is when his girlfriend goes to find him at the athletics club and knew that he would be there because his schedule was as "regular as a station timetable". **This demonstrates** how Patrick sticks to his schedule so consistently that his girlfriend knew exactly where he would be at a certain time. The phrase "regular as a station timetable" shows how the author compares Patrick to a printed schedule that follows arrival and departure times to the minute, thereby emphasizing Patrick's predictability and rigidity.

An example of his egotistical nature is when it is revealed that he won an award for his town's Entrepreneur of the Year two years earlier and "had not yet quite recovered from the honor", meaning his head was still swelled from receiving the award. **This shows** how his response to winning an award is to feel like he is so great. In fact, during Patrick's conversation with his girlfriend Louisa around the running track, each time he gives her advice it seems that he thinks he knows best, and feels that since he is successful in his business ventures he is superior to her.

Lastly, an example of his condescension is how Patrick talks to Louisa about getting a new job. He says, "you could retrain. I'm sure they do a grant for people like you", making it sound as though he knows better than she does, and also as though she belongs to an inferior class. He also states, "you could be a beautician. You're pretty enough." Telling your girlfriend she's "pretty enough" is not much of a compliment, and **this shows** Patrick's condescending attitude toward Louisa, since he appears to think she would be grateful for the lukewarm compliment!





Writing Skills

Movie Reviews

Available in the format below:



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Movie Reviews

Writing a movie review is often a motivating task for students since they get to choose a movie for which they have strong feelings, whether positive or negative. At one of my students' insistence, I actually watched *Sharknado* (don't do it!) This straightforward, easy-to-follow outline provides students with a scaffold from which they can write their own movie reviews. An introduction paragraph, a plot summary and characters paragraph, a critique paragraph, and a conclusion paragraph are outlined and broken down. The framework includes examples of phrasing used to convey opinions, begin plot summaries, and provide recommendations. For their critique, students choose which film aspects to discuss from a list that includes musical score, character development, special effects, realism, cinematography, and more. Includes therapeutic notes.

Name _____

Date _____

Movie Review of _____

*Give one to five stars/popcorn bags/soda cups/smiley faces

Outline

1) Intro

a) your like/dislike

(ex: *"this is my favorite movie of all time ..."* or *"I can't believe I sat through the whole thing ..."*)

b) background info

include genre, release date, director, main actors

may include popularity, box office info (i.e. \$\$\$), and/or other detail

2) Basic info

a) plot summary (keep it super brief!!)

(ex: *"the movie tells the story of ..."* or *"the film follows ..."*)

b) characters

3) Your critique

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

(Choose from: character relationships, character development, character transformation, inspirational story, thought-provoking story, writing quality, dialogue, humor, action, horror, acting quality, cinematography, pacing, special effects, animation, musical score, songs, bad taste, gore, realism)

4) Conclusion

a) summary

b) recommendation (who would like/dislike it)

(ex: *"horror fans will ..."* or *"if you like sappy romances you ..."*)



Therapeutic Notes

When I do this activity with my students, we often start by analyzing one or two movie reviews together, noting the underlying structure of each. Many reviews follow the basic organization of this outline.

Also, students typically require definitions and explanations for some of the features from which they will choose for their critique discussion. In particular, I always need to explain “pacing”, “musical score”, and the difference between “character development” (how the director lets the audience learn more about a particular character) and “character transformation” (how a character changes throughout the film). I like to give lots of examples to accompany definitions. To demonstrate an example of good cinematography, I show a trailer for the movie *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Check it out and you’ll see what I mean!

Lastly, I encourage my students to choose a film they are passionate about: one they either loved or hated.



Writing Skills

Reader Presupposition

Complaint Letters

Available in the format below:



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Reader Presupposition: Complaint Letters

This activity is unlike any I've found available for perspective taking and is one of my very favorites! It addresses the intricacies of writing while keeping your reader in mind, and the all-important skill of modifying your wording to give another person a targeted impression of you, all while working on a practical high-level life skill. It also combines writing skills and social skills. It begins with an actual complaint letter email requesting monetary compensation, extensive therapy notes on how to conduct the activity (including sentence by sentence interpretation of the effectiveness of the sample complaint letter's wording), and novel situations from which students must write their own complaint letters. When writing their complaint letters, students are tasked with choosing both semantic content and wording that will give their readers two targeted impressions of them: honest and reasonable. I have watched many of my students notably improve their perspective taking skills to a more sophisticated level from this activity. (Plus teenagers love being given not only permission, but also the expectation, to complain!)

Name _____

Date _____

Sample Letter

To Whom It May Concern,

I stayed at the Rolling Thunder Inn South in Boise, Idaho last week, from April 16–21. My brother and sister-in-law stayed in the room next to mine for the same five nights. My bill may be under my brother's name: William Stevens. When we checked in Sunday night, April 16, we were quoted a price of \$79.99. All three of us remember that quote. I specifically remember thinking, "okay, my total will be \$400 for the five nights". The morning we checked out, our bills reflected the price of \$89.99 per night. We brought this discrepancy to the attention of the hotel's staff, but were told that since we had signed a paper the night we arrived that had the \$89.99 price on it, we were responsible for that price.

I am asking that we receive a refund for the difference between our quoted price and the price we were charged for two reasons. First, although I understand that a signature is legally binding, I would like you to consider that we arrived at the hotel close to midnight after driving for fourteen hours, and were extremely motivated to finish the check-in process quickly since we were all exhausted, and did not notice the small printed price on the form we signed. And, it was your staff's mistake to print a different price on that form than the price they quoted to us seconds earlier. Second, my brother, sister-in-law, and I have all stayed at your hotel previously. My brother's daughter (my niece) lives two miles from your hotel, and so we planned to continue staying at your hotel every time we visit her in Boise. If we do not receive a refund of \$50 each (one refund for me and one for my brother and sister-in-law) we will not stay at your hotel again. Your hotel will essentially lose hundreds or thousands of dollars over time if you choose not to honor the price you quoted us the night we arrived.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Lisa Thompkin

Therapeutic Notes

Reader Presupposition: Complaint Letters

I use this activity to work on listener/reader presupposition. In earlier therapy sessions, I've discussed with my students the importance of always considering your communicative partner's perspective and adjusting your words and behaviors accordingly for two reasons. I explain that it's important to be altruistic and be kind to others, and it's also important to look out for yourself by giving others the best possible impression of you. This activity focuses on the latter.

I start this activity off by telling my students that this is an actual complaint email I sent (I've used pseudonyms here). I explain that whenever we speak or write to someone, we need to consider how our words affect them, and in cases where we are making a request we need to particularly consider how everything we say gives the other person an impression of us. In this situation, where I am requesting compensation, there are two impressions of myself I want to give: **honest** and **reasonable**.

To Whom It May Concern, *(I explain to my students that since the Rolling Thunder Inn is a hotel chain, I looked up an email address on their website for customer service. Also "To Whom It May Concern" is the appropriate opening to use when you don't know the name of the person you are addressing.)*

I stayed at the Rolling Thunder Inn South in Boise, Idaho last week, from April 16–21. My brother and sister-in-law stayed in the room next to mine for the same five nights. My bill may be under my brother's name: William Stevens. *(I explain that I provide these specific pieces of information because the first thing the person who receives this email will do is check Rolling Thunder Inn's records to verify my stay there.)* When we checked in Sunday night, April 16, we were quoted a price of \$79.99. All three of us remember that quote. I specifically remember thinking, "okay, my total will be \$400 for the five nights". *(The previous two sentences help make me seem **honest**; by discovering these details about my thought process, the reader can now relate to my story.)* The morning we checked out, our bills reflected the price of \$89.99 per night. We brought this discrepancy *(I make sure my students know this word and see how it makes note of the staff's mistake)* to the attention of the hotel's staff, but were told that since we had signed a paper the night we arrived that had the \$89.99 price on it, we were responsible for that price. *(I explain that the first paragraph should give all the background information, and must be clear while providing specific information.)*



I am asking that we receive a refund for the difference between our quoted price and the price we were charged for two reasons. (I emphasize that the second paragraph begins with my request.) First, although I understand that a signature is legally binding, *(I ask my students why they think I provided evidence here against my position. We connect this technique to writing a persuasive essay where you choose to mention an argument your opposition would propose and then dispute it. But, much more importantly, I explain that admitting evidence against my position makes me come across as **reasonable**.)* I would like you to consider that we arrived at the hotel close to midnight after driving for fourteen hours, and were extremely motivated to finish the check-in process quickly since we were all exhausted, and did not notice the small printed price on the form we signed. (I tell my students that here is where I try the “pity approach”, and I often read the preceding lines in a pitiful tone for their amusement. I also point out that I made sure to mention the small size of the printed price.) And, it was your staff’s mistake to print a different price on that form than the price they quoted to us seconds earlier. *(I note that I made sure to point out the error the hotel staff made.)* Second, my brother, sister-in-law, and I have all stayed at your hotel previously. My brother’s daughter (my niece) lives two miles from your hotel, and so we planned to continue staying at your hotel every time we visit her in Boise. If we do not receive a refund of \$50 each (one refund for me and one for my brother and sister-in-law) we will not stay at your hotel again. Your hotel will essentially lose hundreds or thousands of dollars over time if you choose not to honor the price you quoted us the night we arrived. (I explain to my students that here is where I threaten the hotel chain, and that it’s okay to make this type of threat, that usually a monetary threat is the type of threat a company will respond to, and that it’s important to word it politely. I also discuss that my use of the word “honor” is a psychological strategy that could make the receiver of this email feel dishonorable if he or she doesn’t grant me the refund.)

Thank you for your consideration of my request. (Again, I emphasize the importance of being polite: because it’s good to be kind to others [altruism], and because it makes me come across as **reasonable** which would make the email’s receiver more likely to give me a refund [self-interest]).

Sincerely,

Lisa Thompkins



When we finish I ask my students if they think I received the refund. (I did!) One of my students was clever enough to deduce that I had received the refund because, as he put it, “if you hadn’t, you wouldn’t have had us do this activity.”

The next activity is to have students write their own letters, keeping in mind their goals: to describe the given situations clearly, and to come across as honest and reasonable. Included are two given situations.

Notes for California Pizza Kitchen complaint letter:

Students must choose whether they want to ask for \$200 to replace the boots or \$35 to have them cleaned. We discuss the advantage and disadvantage of each choice:

Asking for \$200 — The restaurant chain would be less likely to proffer the higher sum of money, but then you would be able to replace the boots.

Asking for \$35 — The restaurant chain would be more likely to proffer this small sum of money, but your boots may not end up salvaged.

Notes for Green Valley movie theater complaint letter:

Students must choose what kind of compensation they want to request.

Since it’s implied in the situation that the student and his/her friend do not plan to return to Green Valley anytime soon, I emphasize the importance of including in the complaint letter the fact that the town of Green Valley is a four-hour car ride away and its local movie theater is not part of a chain near their hometown; hence, movie coupons would be valueless.



Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Write a two-paragraph letter of complaint/request.

Your situation:

You and your family celebrated your mom's birthday at the California Pizza Kitchen in Westbury, Long Island this past Saturday night. During the meal, your waiter accidentally spilled a glass of Coke on you, soaking your shirt and pants. He apologized profusely, and the manager came over. She offered to pay to have your clothes dry cleaned, but you declined since you were wearing a "run-of-the-mill" flannel top and old jeans. Also, you thought the Coke would come out when you washed your clothes, and it did. So instead the manager gave you and your family free desserts at the end of the meal.

However, what you didn't realize until you got home later that evening was that you were wearing your new suede boots, and the Coke that spilled onto your boots ruined the suede. You feel you should be compensated, because it was the waiter's fault, not yours, that the suede got ruined. Your boots cost \$200 and you still have the receipt. You called two different dry cleaners and were told by both that it would cost \$35 to have your boots cleaned, but there was no guarantee that the suede could be salvaged.

Write the letter:

The first paragraph should describe the events. (*what happened*)

The second paragraph should start with your request for compensation, and then should include the reasons why you believe your request should be granted. (*why they should give you what you are requesting*)



Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Write a two-paragraph letter of complaint/request.

Your situation:

You and your friend took a weekend trip to the small town of Green Valley. You left Friday evening and drove four hours to get to the Green Valley Motel. You had a good time, visiting shops and eating out, until Sunday afternoon when you and your friend went to the local movie theater and bought two overpriced tickets (\$21 each!) to see the latest action movie. For the first five minutes of the movie the sound wasn't working, and then for the next twenty minutes, although the sound was on, there was a vertical line going down the middle of the screen. By then you both felt the movie experience had been ruined, and you went to the box office to get a refund. The teenager in the box office said that he could not give you a refund, and that you would have to speak to the manager who was currently at another movie theater, a fifteen-minute drive away.

You drove to the other theater to speak to the manager, but much to your surprise he said he wouldn't give you a refund, and would only offer you each a coupon to see a different movie. He wouldn't give in, even after you and your friend explained that you had already seen every other movie playing at the two small theaters, and you couldn't use the coupon another day since you were leaving Green Valley that evening and lived four hours away!

Write the letter:

The first paragraph should describe the events. (*what happened*)

The second paragraph should start with your request for compensation, and then should include the reasons why you believe your request should be granted. (*why they should give you what you are requesting*)





Grammar

Subjects, Verbs, and Objects

Available in the format below:



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Subjects, Verbs, and Objects

In order to attain subject-verb agreement, noun-pronoun agreement, parallelism, and other syntactical structures, students must first be able to identify subjects, verbs, and objects within sentences!

This two-page grammar worksheet begins with an explanation of these parts of speech, followed by two different tasks for students: identification of these parts within provided sentences and a fill-in-the-blank exercise. An answer key is included. The worksheets on prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases are suggested follow-ups, as each requires identification of subjects, verbs, and objects in more grammatically complex sentences.

Name _____

Date _____

Subjects, Verbs, and Objects

- Subjects and objects are always nouns, so they are people, places, animals, things, and events.
- Verbs are actions.
- Every sentence must have a subject and a verb.
- Not every sentence has an object.
- The subject does the action.
- The object has the action done to it.

Directions: Underline the verbs, write S above the subjects, and write O above the objects in the following sentences.

- 1) The cat chased the mouse.
- 2) Henry drove his new car.
- 3) William lost his toothbrush.
- 4) I sneezed.
- 5) My son rode his bicycle to school.
- 6) Henry drove to the playground.
- 7) Sophie traveled along the side of the highway.
- 8) Sophie traveled the country last summer.
- 9) I drank the juice and the coffee this morning.
- 10) He ran over the bridge.
- 11) She bought the dress from her favorite store.



Name _____

Date _____

Subjects, Verbs, and Objects

Directions: Fill in the blanks with subjects, verbs, and objects. Then identify all subjects, verbs, and objects by placing an S, V, or O above each.

- 1) The _____ chased the mouse.
- 2) _____ ran to the store.
- 3) _____ bought that chair on sale.
- 4) Sam rescued _____ from the river.
- 5) David drank _____ every morning.
- 6) The students studied _____ yesterday.
- 7) My older brother _____ his coffee.
- 8) His sister _____ her book at the bus stop before school.
- 9) Vanessa _____ at the store.
- 10) Erica _____.
- 11) The old lady _____.
- 12) _____ the puppy.
- 13) _____ ate _____.
- 14) _____.

Find a long sentence in a book or magazine and write it below, then underline the verbs, and identify the subjects and objects:



Subjects, Verbs, and Objects – Answer Key

- Subjects and objects are always nouns, so they are people, places, animals, things, and events.
- Verbs are actions.
- Every sentence must have a subject and a verb.
- Not every sentence has an object.
- The subject does the action.
- The object has the action done to it.

Directions: Underline the verbs, write S above the subjects, and write O above the objects in the following sentences.

- 1) The cat chased the mouse. S: cat, O: mouse
- 2) Henry drove his new car. S: Henry, O: car
- 3) William lost his toothbrush. S: William, O: toothbrush
- 4) I sneezed. S: I
- 5) My son rode his bicycle to school. S: son, O: bicycle
- 6) Henry drove to the playground. S: Henry
- 7) Sophie traveled along the side of the highway. S: Sophie
- 8) Sophie traveled the country last summer. S: Sophie, O: country
- 9) I drank the juice and the coffee this morning. S: I, O: juice, coffee
- 10) He ran over the bridge. S: He
- 11) She bought the dress from her favorite store. S: She, O: dress



Subjects, Verbs, and Objects – Answer Key

Directions: Fill in the blanks with subjects, verbs, and objects. **Examples are given.**

Then identify all subjects, verbs, and objects by placing an S, V, or O above each.

- 1) The cat chased the mouse. S: cat, V: chased, O: mouse
- 2) Harvey ran to the store. S: Harvey, V: ran
- 3) Miranda bought that chair on sale. S: Miranda, V: bought, O: chair
- 4) Sam rescued the struggling puppy from the river. S: Sam, V: rescued, O: puppy
- 5) David drank a milkshake every morning. S: David, V: drank, O: milkshake
- 6) The students studied philosophy yesterday. S: students, V: studied, O: philosophy
- 7) My older brother sipped his coffee. S: brother, V: sipped, O: coffee
- 8) His sister read her book at the bus stop before school. S: sister, V: read, O: book
- 9) Vanessa worked at the store. S: Vanessa, V: worked
- 10) Erica sold gold and silver jewelry. S: Erica, V: sold, O: jewelry
- 11) The old lady ran the Boston Marathon. S: lady, V: ran, O: Boston Marathon
- 12) My next-door neighbor found the puppy. S: neighbor, V: found, O: puppy
- 13) His British cousin ate all the jelly sandwiches. S: cousin, V: ate, O: sandwiches
- 14) Your bikini will shrink in the dryer. S: bikini, V: will shrink

Find a long sentence in a book or magazine and write it below, then underline the verbs, and identify the subjects and objects:

Eight people from her class were also starting their freshman year at Arizona State University, but she was currently friends with only two of them. S: people, O: year, S: she, O: friends





Grammar

Subjects, Verbs, Objects Prepositional Phrases

Available in the format below:



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Subjects, Verbs, Objects and Prepositional Phrases

Most of my high school students don't know what a preposition is. And the truth is that in order to maintain subject-verb agreement, they have to know how to locate the subject and its corresponding verb. In complex sentences, identifying and subsequently disregarding the prepositional phrases is an effective way to help locate the subjects and verbs. This skill is important for writing sophisticated and grammatically correct sentences. This two-page worksheet teaches students how to spot and omit prepositional phrases by first identifying prepositions, and then challenges them to find subjects, verbs, and objects in the leftover "core" of the sentences.

Name _____

Date _____

Prepositional Phrases

The following are prepositions:

to	from	with	without	on top of
by	off	inside	outside	in front of
of	over	next to	among	in back of
at	into	below	beneath	behind
on	across	against	between	near to
in	above	around	through	far from
for	under	along	within	beyond

Prepositions begin **prepositional phrases**.

Directions: Fill in the blanks below.

preposition

prepositional phrases

to

to the river's bank

for

for the children

with

with all good intentions

under

under the shiny bridge

from

through the tunnel

around

behind the barn

without



Name _____

Date _____

Subjects, Verbs, Objects and Prepositional Phrases

Put parentheses () around the **prepositional phrases**:

- 1) George followed her to the ends of the Earth.
- 2) Under the bridge Sara found a giant rat.
- 3) In the beginning of time the Earth was covered by lava.
- 4) He walked from the water tower to the river's edge.
- 5) He walked the streets at night.
- 6) I discovered at the end of the trail a beaver's dam.
- 7) She looked in her new cookbook for the perfect recipe for her brother's birthday dinner.
- 8) From the Midtown Tunnel to the Queens/Long Island border, the Long Island Expressway is completely backed up.
- 9) In the parking lot she explained the basic plot of the movie.
- 10) Over the next ten years I will return all your money.

Now go back and with a dark marker **black out all the prepositional phrases**.

What's left is the "core" of the sentence. This is where you'll find the subjects, verbs, and objects. Go back, **underline the verbs**, and put **S** above the **subjects** and **O** above the **objects**.



Prepositional Phrases – Answer Key

The following are prepositions:

to	from	with	without	on top of
by	off	inside	outside	in front of
of	over	next to	among	in back of
at	into	below	beneath	behind
on	across	against	between	near to
in	above	around	through	far from
for	under	along	within	beyond

Prepositions begin **prepositional phrases**.

Directions: Fill in the blanks below.

preposition

to

for

with

under

from

through

between

around

behind

outside

without

prepositional phrases

to the river's bank

for the children

with all good intentions

under the shiny bridge

from the grocery store

through the tunnel

between you and me

around the corner

behind the barn

outside my picture window

without all the bells and whistles

Note: Students can choose any preposition when both columns are blank.



Subjects, Verbs, Objects and Prepositional Phrases— Answer Key

Put parentheses () around the **prepositional phrases**:

- 1) George followed her (to the ends) (of the Earth). S: George, O: her
- 2) (Under the bridge) Sara found a giant rat. S: Sara, O: rat
- 3) (In the beginning) (of time) the Earth was covered (by lava). S: earth
- 4) He walked (from the water tower) (to the river's edge). S: He
- 5) He walked the streets (at night). S: He, O: streets
- 6) I discovered (at the end) (of the trail) a beaver's dam. S: I, O: dam
- 7) She looked (in her new cookbook) (for the perfect recipe) (for her brother's birthday dinner). S: She
- 8) (From the Midtown Tunnel) (to the Queens/Long Island border), the Long Island Expressway is completely backed up. S: Long Island Expressway
- 9) (In the parking lot) she explained the basic plot (of the movie). S: she, O: plot
- 10) (Over the next ten years) I will return all your money. S: I, O: money

Now go back and with a dark marker **black out all the prepositional phrases**.

What's left is the “core” of the sentence, where you'll find the subjects, verbs, and objects. Go back, **underline the verbs**, and put **S** above the subjects and **O** above the **objects**.



Grammar

**Subjects, Verbs, Objects
Adverbial Phrases**

Available in the format below:



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Subjects, Verbs, Objects and Adverbial Phrases

A follow-up to *Subjects, Verbs, Objects and Prepositional Phrases*, this two-page worksheet continues to teach students how to locate subjects, verbs, and objects within the “core” of sentences by first finding and omitting the adverbial phrases within those sentences. Identifying subjects, verbs, and objects is essential to achieving subject-verb agreement, noun-pronoun agreement, and overall syntactic accuracy. I have found that many of my students have received little or no instruction in adverbial phrases. This worksheet lends easily to the teaching of these grammatical structures and includes an answer key.

Name _____

Date _____

Subjects, Verbs, Objects and Adverbial Phrases

Adverbial phrases function as adverbs and answer the questions: when, where, why or how an action happens. Here are some adverbs that begin adverbial phrases:

if	when	because	before	after	although
as	that	since	unless	until	though
so	while	where	often	'til	rarely
instead	sometimes	whenever	with	without	perhaps

Examples of adverbial phrases:

If he calls she will bring home the soup.

I have to go to the store **because my refrigerator's empty**.

Until Sue hears her mom's voice she won't relax.

Pam goes to work **so that she can pay her rent**.

Since the limousine is so expensive I need to borrow \$40.

Put parentheses around the adverbial phrases in the following sentences:

- 1) I'll call Tom if I can find my cell phone.
- 2) As soon as I can I'll walk around the corner.
- 3) He won't go unless Samantha's going to be there.
- 4) Jim gets nervous whenever he has to sing in public.
- 5) He walked the streets at night after the rain ended.
- 6) I discovered while walking to work a beaver's dam.
- 7) For the experiment to work, you must follow the directions whenever you come across them exactly.
- 8) Whenever my dad takes me to lunch he always treats me.
- 9) I'll be ready as soon as I can find my bright red shoes.

Now, go back to your sentences and look at what's left after you omit all adverbial phrases. Whatever is left over is the "core" of the sentence. Look in this "core" to find the subject, the verb, and, if included, the object. Label them **S**, **V**, and **O**.



Subjects, Verbs, Objects and Adverbial Phrases— Answer Key

Adverbial phrases function as adverbs and answer the questions: when, where, why or how an action happens. Here are some adverbs that begin adverbial phrases:

if	when	because	before	after	although
as	that	since	unless	until	though
so	while	where	often	‘til	rarely
instead	sometimes	whenever	with	without	perhaps

Examples of adverbial phrases:

If he calls she will bring home the soup.

I have to go to the store **because my refrigerator’s empty**.

Until Sue hears her mom’s voice she won’t relax.

Pam goes to work **so that she can pay her rent**.

Since the limousine is so expensive I need to borrow \$40.

Put parentheses around the adverbial phrases in the following sentences:

- 1) I’ll call Tom (*if I can find my cell phone*). S: I, V: will call, O: Tom
- 2) (*As soon as I can*) I’ll walk around the corner. S: I, V: will walk
- 3) He won’t go (*unless Samantha’s going to be there*). S: He, V: won’t go
- 4) Jim gets nervous (*whenever he has to sing in public*). S: Jim, V: gets
- 5) He walked the streets at night (*after the rain ended*). S: He, V: walked, O: streets
- 6) I discovered (*while walking to work*) a beaver’s dam. S: I, V: discovered, O: dam
- 7) (*For the experiment to work*), you must follow the directions (whenever you come across them) exactly. S: you, V: must follow, O: directions
- 8) (*Whenever my dad takes me to lunch*) he always treats me. S: he, V: treats, O: me
- 9) I’ll be ready (*as soon as I can find my bright red shoes*). S: I, V: will be

Now, go back to your sentences and look at what’s left after you omit all adverbial phrases. Whatever is left over is the “core” of the sentence. Look in this “core” to find the subject, the verb, and, if included, the object. Label them **S**, **V**, and **O**.

Note: When I do this worksheet with my students, we place the S’s, V’s, and O’s directly above the subjects, verbs, and objects.





Grammar

Noun-Pronoun Agreement

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Noun-Pronoun Agreement

Anyone who wants to write complex, grammatically correct essays or pass the grammar section of the SAT or ACT must master noun-pronoun agreement. In order to attain accurate syntax, students must match nouns to nouns and nouns to pronouns in terms of singularity vs. plurality. Students, therefore, must first be able to identify subjects and objects—a skill worked on in the *Subjects, Verbs, and Objects*, *Prepositional Phrases*, and *Adverbial Phrases* worksheets. They must also be able to classify nouns and pronouns as singular or plural. This grammar worksheet begins by providing an explanation of three different types of pronouns (those serving as subjects, those serving as objects, and those showing possession), followed by a task requiring students to identify nouns and pronouns as singular or plural, and ending with a task requiring students to match nouns and their corresponding nouns or pronouns in terms of singularity or plurality. An answer key is included.

Name _____

Date _____

Noun-Noun and Noun-Pronoun Agreement

Nouns can be singular or plural.

Pronouns are words used to refer to nouns and can also be singular or plural.

Pronouns as subjects: I, you, he, she, it, they, we, this, that, those, these

Examples: I ate the apple.

She drove the car.

You wrote the letter.

Pronouns as objects: me, you, him, her, it, them, us, this, that, those, these

Examples: Sara taught us.

The dog bit me.

Rainy days depress him.

Henry ran to them.

Possessive pronouns tell to whom or to what something belongs.

Possessive pronouns: my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, their, theirs, our, ours

Examples: Give me his coat.

That notebook is hers.

Sam sees your car.

Directions: Identify the following nouns and pronouns as singular (S) or plural (P)

women ____ mechanic ____ they ____ each ____ we ____

you ____ fungi ____ curriculum ____ galaxy ____ us ____

assignments ____ your professors ____ Susan and I ____ swimmers ____

his ____ medicine ____ her pockets ____ their work ____ them ____

everyone ____ language ____ her happiness ____ it ____ my cats ____

Directions: Find the corresponding nouns and pronouns and make sure they match in terms of singularity and plurality.

- 1) The company had no organic dyes originally; they used extracts from various kinds of succulents to make dyes for their pottery.
- 2) The legitimacy of the museum exhibition featuring several paintings of landscapes was called into question when another museum's curator discovered that it was all made in Japan.
- 3) The garment, designed by one of the Greek artists who followed Alexander the Great on their quest to conquer surrounding countries, demonstrates a classic Grecian aesthetic.
- 4) The college professor, when questioned by a reporter, proposed the notion that attending graduate school may make young poets liable to become an unimaginative sluggard.
- 5) The local shopkeeper and his partner, Robert, agreed completely on how to run the store until he attended a workshop for small business owners and discovered a variety of strategies for increasing sales.
- 6) Few arguments grow as heated as that which flare up among immediate and extended relatives around the dinner table during the holidays.
- 7) Initially the prairie dogs all seemed identical, yet after several weeks of observation the scientists discovered that each had their own distinct mannerisms and personality.
- 8) Both Hector and Peter left the philosophy department and decided to become a psychologist after reading about Abraham Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs.
- 9) Anyone who suffers from serious food allergies will have trouble controlling the severe reactions that they experience after eating certain foods.
- 10) An ICU nurse typically works long shifts, because they are responsible for overseeing the care of seriously ill patients.

Noun-Noun and Noun-Pronoun Agreement

Answer Key

Nouns can be singular or plural.

Pronouns are words used to refer to nouns and can also be singular or plural.

Pronouns as subjects: I, you, he, she, it, they, we, this, that, those, these

Examples: I ate the apple.

She drove the car.

You wrote the letter.

Pronouns as objects: me, you, him, her, it, them, us, this, that, those, these

Examples: Sara taught us.

The dog bit me.

Rainy days depress him.

Henry ran to them.

Possessive pronouns tell to whom or to what something belongs.

Possessive pronouns: my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, their, theirs, our, ours

Examples: Give me his coat.

That notebook is hers.

Sam sees your car.

Directions: Identify the following nouns and pronouns as singular (S) or plural (P)

women P mechanic S they P each S we P

you S or P fungi P curriculum S galaxy S us P

assignments P your professors P Susan and I P swimmers P

his S medicine S her pockets P their work S them P

everyone S language S her happiness S it S my cats P



Directions: Find the corresponding nouns and pronouns and make sure they match in terms of singularity and plurality. The correct nouns and pronouns are in parentheses.

Note: Students can attain noun-noun and noun-pronoun agreement within the following sentences in a variety of ways: by rewriting the sentences, by crossing out nouns and pronouns and writing the correct forms above, or orally. You will see that sometimes the difficulty lies not with determining if a noun is singular or plural but with figuring out which noun matches which pronoun or other noun.

- 1) The **company** (singular) had no organic dyes originally; **they** (it) used extracts from various kinds of succulents to make dyes for **their** (its) pottery.
- 2) The legitimacy of the museum exhibition featuring several **paintings** (plural) of landscapes was called into question when another museum's curator discovered that **it** (they) **was** (were) all made in Japan.
- 3) The garment, designed by one of the Greek artists who followed **Alexander the Great** (singular) on **their** (his) quest to conquer surrounding countries, demonstrates a classic Grecian aesthetic.
- 4) The college professor, when questioned by a reporter, proposed the notion that attending graduate school may make young **poets** (plural) liable to become **an unimaginative sluggard** (unimaginative sluggards).
- 5) **The local shopkeeper and his partner, Robert** (plural), agreed completely on how to run the store until **he** (they) attended a workshop for small business owners and discovered a variety of strategies for increasing sales.
- 6) Few **arguments** (plural) grow as heated as **that** (those) which flare up among immediate and extended relatives around the dinner table during the holidays.
- 7) Initially the prairie dogs all seemed identical, yet after several weeks of observation the scientists discovered that **each** (singular) had **their** (its) own distinct mannerisms and personality.
- 8) **Both Hector and Peter** (plural) left the philosophy department and decided to become **a psychologist** (psychologists) after reading about Abraham Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs.
- 9) **Anyone** (singular) who suffers from serious food allergies will have trouble controlling the severe reactions that **they** (she) experience(s) after eating certain foods. **Note:** appropriate pronouns to use when referring to a person (when the gender is unknown) include "he", "she", or "he or she".
- 10) An ICU **nurse** (singular) typically works long shifts, because **they** (he) **are** (is) responsible for overseeing the care of seriously ill patients.



Grammar

Subject-Verb Agreement

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Subject-Verb Agreement

All students, not just language impaired students, struggle to some degree with subject-verb agreement. But in order to attain accurate syntax, students must match subjects to their corresponding verbs in terms of singularity vs. plurality. Students, therefore, must first be able to identify subjects and their corresponding verbs: a skill worked on in the *Subjects, Verbs, and Objects*, *Prepositional Phrases*, and *Adverbial Phrases* worksheets. They must also be able to classify subjects as singular or plural. The first *Subject-Verb Agreement* worksheet works directly on all these skills. The remaining *Subject-Verb Agreement* worksheets address two types of instances that increase the level of difficulty: collective nouns and verbs that precede their corresponding subjects. Answer keys are included.

Name _____

Date _____

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects are nouns or pronouns that do something (i.e., they go with verbs).

Singular nouns need **singular** verbs and **plural** nouns need **plural** verbs.

Examples of nouns and pronouns:

Singular: bird boy train man child I it stimulus report hypothesis

Plural: birds boys trains men children we they stimuli reports hypotheses

Directions: Identify the following nouns and pronouns as singular (S) or plural (P).

women ____ architect ____ no one ____ each ____ we ____

you ____ fungi ____ curriculum ____ galaxy ____ constellation ____

homework ____ professors ____ Susan and I ____ swimming ____

progress ____ medicine ____ organization's policy ____ they ____

computer programs ____ language ____ sheep ____ fish ____ it ____

Directions: Fix the verb so that it matches the subject/noun.

- 1) Known for their displays of wealth and exclusivity, the stores of Park Avenue in Manhattan showcases merchandise from many of the world's most exclusive stores.
- 2) Social inequality, a philosophy of enlightenment, and a financial crisis was important factors leading to the origins of the French Revolution.
- 3) The reporter was sure that the government's admittance of the terrible conditions in the African countries were calculated to reduce possible actions taken by other governments.



- 4) Although the speakers for the convention has not been determined, it is likely that the convention organizers planned to have several important experts in the field speak about their current research.
- 5) The journals of Jane Austen, an author of exceptional talent and wit, was mostly hidden or destroyed by her well-intentioned family who wanted to steadfastly protect her privacy.
- 6) Learning to eat healthful foods in appropriate portion sizes are very important to people trying to not only lose weight but also maintain their weight loss.
- 7) Megatsunamis, which can rise to more than one hundred feet in height, is caused by large-scale coastal landslides and can do much more damage than smaller tsunamis.
- 8) The work of some rock bands, including the Beatles, the Doors, and the Rolling Stones, never lose its authenticity and importance to the field of music, even fifty years later.
- 9) Those who criticize socialized medicine state that the benefits of the system is overshadowed by the fact that it assigns a huge financial burden on the average taxpayer.
- 10) One hurdle that many entrepreneurs must overcome are designing competitive products while manufacturing them at a low enough cost that enables them to continue charging prices considered affordable by the general public.

Subject-Verb Agreement—Answer Key

Subjects are nouns or pronouns that do something (i.e., they go with verbs).

Singular nouns need **singular** verbs and **plural** nouns need **plural** verbs.

Examples of nouns and pronouns:

Singular: bird boy train man child I it stimulus report hypothesis

Plural: birds boys trains men children we they stimuli reports hypotheses

Directions: Identify the following nouns and pronouns as singular (S) or plural (P).

women: P architect: S no one: S each: S we: P

you: S/P fungi: P curriculum: S galaxy: S constellation: S

homework: S professors: P Susan and I: P swimming: S

progress: S medicine: S organization's policy: S they: P

computer programs: P language: S sheep: S/P fish: S/P it: S

Directions: Fix the verb so that it matches the subject/noun.

- 1) Known for their displays of wealth and exclusivity, the stores of Park Avenue in Manhattan **showcase** merchandise from many of the world's most exclusive stores.
- 2) Social inequality, a philosophy of enlightenment, and a financial crisis **were** important factors leading to the origins of the French Revolution.
- 3) The reporter was sure that the government's admittance of the terrible conditions in the African countries **was** calculated to reduce possible actions taken by other governments.

- 4) Although the speakers for the convention **have** not been determined, it is likely that the convention organizers planned to have several important experts in the field speak about their current research.
- 5) The journals of Jane Austen, an author of exceptional talent and wit, **were** mostly hidden or destroyed by her well-intentioned family who wanted to steadfastly protect her privacy.
- 6) Learning to eat healthful foods in appropriate portion sizes **is** very important to people trying to not only lose weight but also maintain their weight loss.
- 7) Megatsunamis, which can rise to more than one hundred feet in height, **are** caused by large-scale coastal landslides and can do much more damage than smaller tsunamis.
- 8) The work of some rock bands, including the Beatles, the Doors, and the Rolling Stones, never **loses** its authenticity and importance to the field of music, even fifty years later.
- 9) Those who criticize socialized medicine state that the benefits of the system **are** overshadowed by the fact that it assigns a huge financial burden on the average taxpayer.
- 10) One hurdle that many entrepreneurs must overcome **is** designing competitive products while manufacturing them at a low enough cost that enables them to continue charging prices considered affordable by the general public.



Name _____

Date _____

Subject-Verb Agreement – Collective Nouns

Subjects are nouns or pronouns that do something (i.e., they go with verbs).

Singular subjects need **singular** verbs and **plural** subjects need **plural** verbs.

Some nouns seem like they are plural, but they are singular.

They are called “**collective nouns**”.

Examples:

army assembly audience class club committee
company crowd gang group public team collection

What do these nouns have in common?

Directions: Fix the verbs so that they match their collective noun subjects.

- 1) The town of Port Washington have fervently embraced the new law requiring all homes to have white picket fences.
- 2) The entire crop of tangerines, except for one orchard standing at the foot of the mountain, were destroyed by a late spring frost that arrived in April and lasted for two days.
- 3) The couple, by purchasing all the Halloween decorations on November 1st for the following year, were able to save an enormous amount of money to spend on refreshments and costumes for the biggest Halloween bash ever.
- 4) That collection of owls of all different sizes are incredibly impressive.
- 5) The number of phone calls received by the town mayor after the destruction caused by the giant rats emphasize the public’s growing fear of those rodents.

Subject-Verb Agreement – Collective Nouns

Answer Key

Subjects are nouns or pronouns that do something (ie. they go with verbs).

Singular subjects need **singular** verbs and **plural** subjects need **plural** verbs.

Some nouns seem like they are plural, but they are singular.

They are called “**collective nouns**”.

Examples:

army assembly audience class club committee
company crowd gang group public team collection

What do these nouns have in common? They all seem like they are plural, but they are singular.

Directions: Fix the verbs so that they match their collective noun subjects.

- 1) The town of Port Washington **has** fervently embraced the new law requiring all homes to have white picket fences.
- 2) The entire crop of tangerines, except for one orchard standing at the foot of the mountain, **was** destroyed by a late spring frost that arrived in April and lasted for two days.
- 3) The couple, by purchasing all the Halloween decorations on November 1st for the following year, **was** able to save an enormous amount of money to spend on refreshments and costumes for the biggest Halloween bash ever.
- 4) That collection of owls of all different sizes **is** incredibly impressive.
- 5) The number of phone calls received by the town mayor after the destruction caused by the giant rats **emphasizes** the public’s growing fear of those rodents.

Name _____

Date _____

Subject-Verb Agreement—Verb before Subject

Subjects are nouns or pronouns that do something (i.e., they go with verbs).

Singular subjects need **singular** verbs and **plural** subjects need **plural** verbs, so first you have to find the subject.

Subjects are almost always followed by their verbs, but . . .

Sometimes subjects come after their verbs in sentences.

Examples:

Once in a lifetime comes an opportunity like this. *This means the same as “an opportunity like this comes once in a lifetime”.*

At the top of the hill stands the oldest oak tree in the county. *What does this mean?*

On the top floor lived a very disagreeable accountant. *What does this mean?*

Directions: First find the subject, and then fix the verbs so that they match their subject/ noun in terms of singularity and plurality.

- 1) In the middle of the street is rows of trees with beautiful pink, purple, and white blossoms flowering fully by the first of May.
- 2) There is so many different ways to wear the scarf I gave you for your birthday, yet I've never seen you wear it.
- 3) Inside the piggy bank is eight dollars in dimes and twenty dollars in quarters, giving you just enough to buy your Dad that jacket he's been wanting.
- 4) Equally appreciated by Dr. Stark's students was his caring, his warmth, and his captivating lecture style, which made him a particularly sought-after professor.
- 5) At the edge of the stream is the beautiful rocks that shine like emeralds, and I plan to glue them to my tabletop at home.

Subject-Verb Agreement—Verb before Subject Answer Key

Subjects are nouns or pronouns that do something (i.e., they go with verbs).

Singular subjects need **singular** verbs and **plural** subjects need **plural** verbs, so first you have to find the subject.

Subjects are almost always followed by their verbs, but . . .

Sometimes subjects come after their verbs in sentences.

Examples:

Once in a lifetime comes an opportunity like this. *This means the same as “an opportunity like this comes once in a lifetime”.*

At the top of the hill stands the oldest oak tree in the county. *What does this mean?*

The oldest oak tree in the county stands at the top of the hill.

On the top floor lived a very disagreeable accountant. *What does this mean?*

A very disagreeable accountant lived on the top floor.

Directions: First find the subject, and then fix the verbs so that they match their subject/ noun in terms of singularity and plurality

- 1) In the middle of the street **are** rows of trees with beautiful pink, purple, and white blossoms flowering fully by the first of May.
- 2) There **are** so many different ways to wear the scarf I gave you for your birthday, yet I've never seen you wear it.
- 3) Inside the piggy bank **are** eight dollars in dimes and twenty dollars in quarters, giving you just enough to buy your Dad that jacket he's been wanting.
- 4) Equally appreciated by Dr. Stark's students **were** his caring, his warmth, and his captivating lecture style, which made him a particularly sought-after professor.
- 5) At the edge of the stream **are** the beautiful rocks that shine like emeralds, and I plan to glue them to my tabletop at home.





Grammar

Parallelism

Available in the format below:



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Parallelism

One of the most common grammar mistakes I see in my high school students' writing involves parallelism. Students must learn to write using parallelism when listing or contrasting components of their content.

This two-page worksheet effectively works on that skill by providing an explanation and examples of parallelism for both lists and contrasts, followed by tasks for both that require students to modify grammatical structures within sentences in order to achieve parallelism. Sentences paraphrased from actual SAT practice sentences are used in order to prepare students for higher-level grammar expectations.

Name _____

Date _____

Parallelism

Parallelism refers to keeping grammatical structures consistent. One situation where you need to keep your grammatical structures consistent is listing components.

Examples:

At the grocery store I bought apples, oranges, and bananas.

(noun, noun, noun)

On the weekends I like to go swimming, biking, and hiking.

(-ing verb, -ing verb, -ing verb)

Last summer I swam at my community pool, biked to my friend's house, and hiked up our town's highest mountain.

(past tense verb + location, past tense verb + location, past tense verb + location)

You will see that when you don't keep listed grammatical structures consistent your sentence can sound awkward:

On the weekends I like to go swimming, biking, and I hike.

Another situation where you need to keep grammatical structures consistent is contrasting ideas/statements. Contrasts are set up by words or phrases such as "either/or", "neither/nor", "this/that", "for/against", "not only/but also".

Examples:

The track meet was not only an exciting challenge but also a fun experience.

(article + adjective + noun, article + adjective + noun)

Neither running the track nor swimming laps appealed to Mary.

(-ing verb + noun, -ing verb + noun)



Directions: Make the listed components (parts) of the following sentences have parallelism.

- 1) Failing to find work on Broadway, the young choreographer supported himself by choreographing music videos, cabaret shows, and he also did some opera dance sequences.
- 2) Brushing your teeth regularly is one way to avoid cavities. If you don't eat sweets is another way.
- 3) Every time you set out on a hike, you should check that you have packed enough food, brought ample first-aid equipment, and to make sure you have a map of the area in which you'll be hiking.
- 4) Two things contribute to the excellent flavor of Sheila's pasta: the fresh ingredients and the way she pays special attention to the timing.
- 5) Advised by the best physical therapists in the city, the clinic director learned to admit, treat, and to release patients in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Directions: Make the contrasted components of the following sentences have parallelism.

- 1) Natural scientists have demonstrated that light can appear not only in waveform but also as particle form, depending upon the conditions under which it is observed.
- 2) Educators worry that more young people vote for the winner of the TV show American Idol than in the presidential election.
- 3) Many American knitters find it easier to hold a ball of yarn in their right hand and not by holding it in their left hand in the manner of continental knitters.

Parallelism—Answer Key

Parallelism refers to keeping grammatical structures consistent. One situation where you need to keep your grammatical structures consistent is making lists.

Examples:

At the grocery store I bought apples, oranges, and bananas.

(noun, noun, noun)

On the weekends I like to go swimming, biking, and hiking.

(-ing verb, -ing verb, -ing verb)

Last summer I swam at my community pool, biked to my friend's house, and hiked up our town's highest mountain.

(past tense verb + location, past tense verb + location, past tense verb + location)

You will see that when you don't keep listed grammatical structures consistent your sentence can sound awkward:

On the weekends I like to go swimming, biking, and I hike.

Note: At this point, teachers can ask students to come up with more examples of sentences that contain lists.

Another situation where you need to keep grammatical structures consistent is contrasting ideas/statements. Contrasts are set up by words or phrases such as "either/or", "neither/nor", "this/that", "for/against", "not only/but also".

Examples:

The track meet was not only an exciting challenge but also a fun experience.

(article + adjective + noun, article + adjective + noun)

Neither running the track nor swimming laps appealed to Mary.

(-ing verb + noun, -ing verb + noun)

Note: At this point, teachers can ask students to come up with more examples of sentences that contain contrasts.



Directions: Make the listed components (parts) of the following sentences have parallelism.

Note: Students can attain parallelism in a variety of ways: by rewriting the sentences, by crossing out and writing the correct forms above, or orally.

Shown below are corrected and rewritten sentences. For some sentences parallelism can be attained correctly in more than one way.

- 1) Failing to find work on Broadway, the young choreographer supported himself by choreographing music videos, cabaret shows, and opera dance sequences.
- 2) Brushing your teeth regularly is one way to avoid cavities. Resisting sweets is another way.
- 3) Every time you set out on a hike, you should check that you have packed enough food, brought ample first-aid equipment, and made sure you have a map of the area in which you'll be hiking.
- 4) Two things contribute to the excellent flavor of Sheila's pasta: the fresh ingredients and her special attention to timing.
- 5) Advised by the best physical therapists in the city, the clinic director learned to admit, treat, and release patients in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Directions: Make the contrasted components of the following sentences have parallelism.

- 1) Natural scientists have demonstrated that light can appear not only in waveform but also in particle form, depending upon the conditions under which it is observed.
- 2) Educators worry that more young people vote for the winner of the TV show American Idol than for the winner of the presidential election.
- 3) Many American knitters find it easier to hold a ball of yarn in their right hand than in their left hand in the manner of continental knitters.



Grammar

Verb Tense

Available in the format below:



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Verb Tense

So many of my students have difficulty keeping their verb tenses consistent when writing essays or summaries. This two-page worksheet improves students' awareness of verb tense and gives them practice maintaining verb tense consistency. It starts with a discussion and examples of verb tense, followed by three different tasks: forming infinitive verbs into past, present, and future tenses; identifying the tenses of given verbs; and finally, correcting verbs' tenses within sentences.

Name _____

Date _____

Verb Tense

Make sure you are using the correct verb tense.

The three most common verb tenses are **present**, **past**, and **future**.

If you see a verb and you're not sure what tense it is, you can "test it out" by putting the following words in front of it to see which one sounds right:

For present tense use **Every day**

For past tense use **Yesterday**

For future tense use **Tomorrow**

Examples:

(present) Every day I eat an apple.

Every day he walks to work.

(past) Yesterday I ate an apple.

Yesterday they walked up the street.

(future) Tomorrow I will eat an apple.

Tomorrow I will walk four miles.

Directions: Write the following verbs in the three tenses.

present

past

future

to predict

to drink

to be

Directions: Identify the following verbs' tenses as present (pr), past (pa), or future (f).

will find ____ found ____ drank ____ drinks ____ take ____

yelled ____ forget ____ will calculate ____ gave ____ goes ____

said ____ will hope ____ amuse ____ swam ____ generated ____

had ____ was ____ will be ____ is ____ were ____



Directions: Change the underlined verbs to the correct tense.

- 1) If there is one thing that we will learn in the 1990's about basking in the sun, it is that the sun's rays can cause irreversible damage leading to cancer.
- 2) Already convinced that she wins the beauty pageant, the young girl acted like a star to the great annoyance of the other contestants and the judges.
- 3) While those who choreographed the piece felt frustrated with the performance, the dancers themselves feel most satisfied with their routine.
- 4) Before she moves away from the ocean, Denise enjoys many lazy days lounging on the beach, watching the waves, and soaking up the sun.
- 5) Thirty years after the lawn shop was opened in Sturgeon Square, the business had to be shut down when much of the inventory is demolished by torrential rains and flooding.
- 6) Because she will be traveling when her home was burglarized, Sandy is determined to hire someone to watch her house when she leaves town on future business trips.
- 7) Squids are mistakenly believed to be unintelligent because they will be portrayed in movies as dumb and aggressive; in reality, however, they were highly intelligent and are aggressive only when threatened.
- 8) The issue of whether homeopathic remedies actually cure illness or simply reduced symptoms is still being investigated.



Verb Tense—Answer Key

Make sure you are using the correct verb tense.

The three most common verb tenses are **present**, **past**, and **future**.

If you see a verb and you're not sure what tense it is, you can "test it out" by putting the following words in front of it to see which one sounds right:

For present tense use **Every day**

For past tense use **Yesterday**

For future tense use **Tomorrow**

Examples:

(present) Every day I eat an apple.

Every day he walks to work.

(past) Yesterday I ate an apple.

Yesterday they walked up the street.

(future) Tomorrow I will eat an apple.

Tomorrow I will walk four miles.

Directions: Write the following verbs in the 3 tenses.

	<u>present</u>	<u>past</u>	<u>future</u>
to predict	predict	predicted	will predict
to drink	drink	drank	will drink
to be (for "I")	am	was	will be

Directions: Identify the following verbs' tenses as present (pr), past (pa), or future (f).

will find <u>f</u>	found <u>pa</u>	drank <u>pa</u>	drinks <u>pr</u>	take <u>pr</u>
yelled <u>pa</u>	forget <u>pr</u>	will calculate <u>f</u>	gave <u>pa</u>	goes <u>pr</u>
said <u>pa</u>	will hope <u>f</u>	amuse <u>pr</u>	swam <u>pa</u>	generated <u>pa</u>
had <u>pa</u>	was <u>pa</u>	will be <u>f</u>	is <u>pr</u>	were <u>pa</u>

Directions: Change the underlined verbs to the correct tense.

- 1) If there is one thing that we learned in the 1990's about basking in the sun, it is that the sun's rays can cause irreversible damage leading to cancer.
- 2) Already convinced that she won the beauty pageant, the young girl acted like a star to the great annoyance of the other contestants and the judges.
- 3) While those who choreographed the piece felt frustrated with the performance, the dancers themselves felt most satisfied with their routine.
- 4) Before she moves away from the ocean, Denise will enjoy many lazy days lounging on the beach, watching the waves, and soaking up the sun.
- 5) Thirty years after the lawn shop was opened in Sturgeon Square, the business had to be shut down when much of the inventory was demolished by torrential rains and flooding.
- 6) Because she was traveling when her home was burglarized, Sandy is determined to hire someone to watch her house when she leaves town on future business trips.
- 7) Squids are mistakenly believed to be unintelligent because they are portrayed in movies as dumb and aggressive; in reality, however, they are highly intelligent and are aggressive only when threatened.
- 8) The issue of whether homeopathic remedies actually cure illness or simply reduce symptoms is still being investigated.



Reading Comprehension

Word Roots

Available in the format below:



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Word Roots

Every speech language pathologist, teacher, and tutor understands how important a strong receptive lexicon is to comprehension of content, and learning common word roots is one of the best ways to expand vocabulary knowledge. Each of these two worksheets, along with answer keys, provides students with ten word roots, their definitions, and example words. Students must then define other example words contained within sentences, and come up with their own sentences containing either a provided or new word.

Name _____

Date _____

Word Roots

Roots: **act** **audio** **equi** **max** **mini**

Directions: Define roots, discuss sentence meanings, and add final sentences.

***act** means _____ (examples: action, active, actor)

- 1) It's time to activate the machine.
- 2) My cousin is a political activist.
- 3) Activism should always be for a noble cause.
- 4) The activation sequence has begun.
- 5) The gymnast actualized her dreams when she won the gold medal.
- 6) _____

***audio** means _____ (examples: audiobook, auditory)

- 1) The police audiotaped the interview.
- 2) My friend, the audio engineer, has worked with lots of musicians.
- 3) Speech language pathologists need to take a couple of audiology classes.
- 4) My sister has to go see an audiologist.
- 5) Your audiovisual presentation was very informative.
- 6) _____

***equi** means _____ (examples: equivalent, equator)

- 1) You can't equate money with happiness.
- 2) I want you to draw an equilateral triangle.
- 3) Women and minorities continue to fight for equality.
- 4) Do you feel like that solution is equitable for everyone involved?
- 5) When I got off the roller coaster I realized I had lost my equilibrium!
- 6) _____

***max** means _____ (examples: maximum, maximal)

- 1) Putting in extra effort will maximize your results.
- 2) When it comes to designing, he is a maximalist.
- 3) I love your flowing maxi dress.
- 4) _____

***mini** means _____ (examples: miniskirt, miniature)

- 1) Politicians are thinking of raising the minimum wage.
- 2) Don't minimize my feelings!
- 3) Sally loves her miniature poodle.
- 4) When it comes to packing for a vacation, I am a minimalist.
- 5) French restaurants are known for serving miniscule portions.
- 6) _____



Word Roots—Answer Key

Roots: **act** **audio** **equi** **max** **mini**

Directions: Define roots, discuss sentence meanings, and add final sentences.

***act** means to do (examples: action, active, actor)

- 1) It's time to activate the machine.
- 2) My cousin is a political activist.
- 3) Activism should always be for a noble cause.
- 4) The activation sequence has begun.
- 5) The gymnast actualized her dreams when she won the gold medal.
- 6) Gardening is a relaxing activity.

***audio** means sound (examples: audiobook, auditory)

- 1) The police audiotaped the interview.
- 2) My friend, the audio engineer, has worked with lots of musicians.
- 3) Speech language pathologists need to take a couple of audiology classes.
- 4) My sister has to go see an audiologist.
- 5) Your audiovisual presentation was very informative.
- 6) His whisper was barely audible.

***equi** means equal (examples: equivalent, equator)

- 1) You can't equate money with happiness.
- 2) I want you to draw an equilateral triangle.
- 3) Women and minorities continue to fight for equality.
- 4) Do you feel like that solution is equitable for everyone involved?
- 5) When I got off the roller coaster I realized I had lost my equilibrium!
- 6) My cousin's house is equidistant from my apartment and my job.

***max** means greatest (examples: maximum, maximal)

- 1) Putting in extra effort will maximize your results.
- 2) When it comes to designing, he is a maximalist.
- 3) I love your flowing maxi dress.
- 4) The cheetah is going at her maximum speed.

***mini** means small or less (examples: miniskirt, miniature)

- 1) Politicians are thinking of raising the minimum wage.
- 2) Don't minimize my feelings!
- 3) Sally loves her miniature poodle.
- 4) When it comes to packing for a vacation, I am a minimalist.
- 5) French restaurants are known for serving miniscule portions.
- 6) I'm getting bogged down by all the minutia.



Name _____

Date _____

Word Roots—2

Roots: **bene** **mal** **ject** **geo** **nov**

Directions: Define roots, discuss sentence meanings, and add final sentences.

***bene** means _____ (examples: beneficial, beneficiary)

- 1) Each beneficiary will receive \$100,000.
- 2) The teacher told us it would be beneficial if we completed the extra credit assignment.
- 3) The annual charity event benefits the homeless.
- 4) The generous benefactor donated his fortune to charity
- 5) The doctor announced that the tumor was benign with a sigh of relief.
- 6) _____

***mal** means _____ (examples: malignant, dismal)

- 1) The children I saw at the homeless shelter appeared malnourished.
- 2) His sense of failure turned him malevolent toward those who were successful.
- 3) She received the heartbreaking news that the tumor was malignant.
- 4) The dismal weather made me want to stay inside all day.
- 5) We don't always see eye to eye, but there's never any real malice between us.
- 6) _____

***ject** means _____ (examples: reject, eject)

- 1) The teacher rejected my offer to help her grade tests.
- 2) The computer ejected the disc.
- 3) At the doctor's office, the nurse injected me with insulin.
- 4) _____

***geo** means _____ (examples: geography, geology)

- 1) Hank the geologist hates when his wife Marie refers to his minerals as rocks.
- 2) The teacher provided insight into the ways geography has shaped cultures.
- 3) Geothermal power has been around for more than a century.
- 4) In geometry, I am currently learning about angles.
- 5) _____

***nov** means _____ (examples: renovate, novice)

- 1) It is hard to be the novice on the team.
- 2) My mom wanted to renovate our outdated kitchen.
- 3) The salesman had an innovative idea.
- 4) The novelty of my new car soon wore off.
- 5) _____



Word Roots—2—Answer Key

Roots: **bene** **mal** **ject** **geo** **nov**

Directions: Define roots, discuss sentence meanings, and add final sentences.

***bene** means good or well (examples: beneficial, beneficiary)

- 1) Each beneficiary will receive \$100,000.
- 2) The teacher told us it would be beneficial if we completed the extra credit assignment.
- 3) The annual charity event benefits the homeless.
- 4) The generous benefactor donated his fortune to charity
- 5) The doctor announced that the tumor was benign with a sigh of relief.
- 6) Kindness benefits both the receiver and the giver.

***mal** means bad (examples: malignant, dismal)

- 1) The children I saw at the homeless shelter appeared malnourished.
- 2) His sense of failure turned him malevolent toward those who were successful.
- 3) She received the heartbreaking news that the tumor was malignant.
- 4) The dismal weather made me want to stay inside all day.
- 5) We don't always see eye to eye, but there's never any real malice between us.
- 6) Mosquito nets significantly decrease the spread of malaria.

***ject** means throw (examples: reject, eject)

- 1) The teacher rejected my offer to help her grade tests.
- 2) The computer ejected the disc.
- 3) At the doctor's office, the nurse injected me with insulin.
- 4) She always needed to interject her opinions into the conversation.

***geo** means earth (examples: geography, geology)

- 1) Hank the geologist hates when his wife Marie refers to his minerals as rocks.
- 2) The teacher provided insight into the ways geography has shaped cultures.
- 3) Geothermal power has been around for more than a century.
- 4) In geometry, I am currently learning about angles.
- 5) My cousin is studying geophysics.

***nov** means new (examples: renovate, novice)

- 1) It is hard to be the novice on the team.
- 2) My mom wanted to renovate our outdated kitchen.
- 3) The salesman had an innovative idea.
- 4) The novelty of my new car soon wore off.
- 5) Given time to think creatively, artists are better able to innovate.



Reading Comprehension

Prefixes and Suffixes

Available in the format below:



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Prefixes and Suffixes

Learning the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes is another great way to expand one's receptive lexicon. These three worksheets give students practice at adding prefixes and suffixes to words, and then defining the updated meaning. As with the *Word Roots* exercises, students become better able to break unfamiliar words down into chunks of meaning. As they familiarize themselves with common prefixes and suffixes, they will begin to identify meanings more readily.

Name _____

Date _____

Prefixes

Prefixes are chunks of meaning that can be added to the beginning of words.

Examples: reread, **dis**engage, **un**fair, **pre**view, **int**olerable, **co**dependent

Directions: Add one of the following prefixes to each numbered word and give the new definition.

(Note: Sometimes the spelling of the new word may need to be changed)

Prefixes:

re = again; **pre** = before; **co** = with or together; **bi** = two;

multi = many; **mal** = bad or wrong; **dis**, **un**, **in** = not or opposite

- 1) _____ write _____
- 2) _____ dependent _____
- 3) _____ open _____
- 4) _____ adapted _____
- 5) _____ reliable _____
- 6) _____ action _____
- 7) _____ view _____
- 8) _____ loyal _____
- 9) _____ worker _____
- 10) _____ colored _____
- 11) _____ lingual _____
- 12) _____ cycle _____
- 13) _____ nourished _____
- 14) _____ upholster _____
- 15) _____ happy _____
- 16) _____ justice _____

Name _____

Date _____

Suffixes

Suffixes are chunks of meaning that can be added to the end of words.

Examples: agreement, happiness, writer, instructor, beautiful, freedom, quickly

Directions: Add one of the following suffixes to each numbered word and give the new definition.

(Note: Sometimes the spelling of the new word may need to be changed)

Suffixes:

ment = condition of; **ness** = state of being; **er** and **or** = one who; **ful** = full of;

dom = place or state of being; **ly** turns adjectives into adverbs

- 1) write _____
- 2) king _____
- 3) open _____
- 4) contain _____
- 5) happy _____
- 6) argue _____
- 7) bore _____
- 8) punish _____
- 9) work _____
- 10) color _____
- 11) engage _____
- 12) sad _____
- 13) adapt _____
- 14) commence _____
- 15) silent _____

16) doubt _____

Name _____

Date _____

Prefixes and Suffixes

Directions: Define each of the following words

(Remember: **able** and **ible** are suffixes that mean **able to**
and **in**, **un**, **non**, and **dis** are prefixes that mean **not** or **the opposite**)

- 1) undependable _____
- 2) unreliable _____
- 3) disagreeable _____
- 4) unattainable _____
- 5) unavailable _____
- 6) unemployable _____
- 7) disable _____
- 8) unforgettable _____
- 9) unidentifiable _____
- 10) inaccessible _____
- 11) incomprehensible _____
- 12) dishonorable _____
- 13) unapproachable _____
- 14) nonrefundable _____
- 15) nonrenewable _____
- 16) intolerable _____
- 17) unbeatable _____
- 18) unbelievable _____
- 19) uneducable _____
- 20) unpredictable _____





Reading Comprehension

Using Context Clues

Available in the format below:



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Using Context Clues

These three vocabulary worksheet pages give your middle school and high school students confidence to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar lexicon by using contextual clues. Each new word is contained within two or three sentences in a row, and each successive sentence gives more specific clues. During my speech therapy sessions, I have my students cover up the page, revealing only one sentence at a time, while I encourage them to take guesses. I have seen tremendous progress in building vocabulary skills as my students generalize their willingness and subsequent ability to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words from contextual clues in novel situations, including the presentation of academic content within the classroom.

Name _____

Date _____

Using Contextual Clues

Often we will come across a word that we don't know. There are four basic ways to figure out what it means. Obviously, the foolproof way is to look up the definition, but this isn't always practical. A second way is to ask someone – don't be hesitant to ask!! Asking questions is a sign of intelligence! A third way is to try to figure out the definition by noting the word's root, prefixes, or suffixes. The fourth way to figure out a word's meaning is to use contextual clues. The context is what's going on in the sentence containing the unknown word or surrounding sentences. Often you can get some idea of an unfamiliar word's meaning.

Directions: Define the underlined word in each sentence. If you're not sure, take a guess.
Only look at one sentence at a time—cover the rest of the paper!

- 1) Samantha foraged through the cupboards.
- 2) The bear foraged through the forest, looking for something to eat.
- 3) She didn't like to see her brother in such a wretched state.
- 4) After he finished the chemotherapy, his body was in a wretched state.
- 5) They lived in a rural part of the country.
- 6) There were few stores and businesses in the rural Mississippi town.
- 7) She snaps on a pair of disposable gloves.
- 8) I don't have to save that gown; it's disposable.
- 9) There are myriad reasons why I don't want to get married.
- 10) I can't even count the myriad ways that I admire her.
- 11) He was notorious for going out with a different girl every night.
- 12) Al Capone was a notorious gangster in the 1930s.
- 13) I'm eating a miniscule lunch today to try to lose weight.
- 14) Your cell phone is so miniscule it could fit into my smallest pocket.

Name _____

Date _____

Using Contextual Clues—Part 2

Directions: Define the underlined word in each sentence. If you're not sure, take a guess.

Only look at one sentence at a time – cover the rest of the paper!

- 1) Her irrepressible nature often got her into a lot of trouble.
- 2) He was irrepressible and that landed him on the bad side of supervisors who were control freaks.
- 3) Consuming too much sugar is detrimental to your health.
- 4) Last year's dry spell was detrimental to Florida's fruit crops.
- 5) Not putting enough energy into school will be a detriment to your chances of getting into the college of your dreams.
- 6) I was worried at first, but after spending more time with my son's girlfriend I decided she was benign.
- 7) You're lucky your tumor turned out to be benign.
- 8) She was so diminutive that everyone thought she was still in grade school.
- 9) Since he only had a studio apartment, Tom looked for the most diminutive dog at the animal shelter.
- 10) Our staff meetings are always so protracted that I start to fall asleep by the end.
- 11) I thought I'd never get out of there; it was the most protracted dinner of my life.
- 12) He was incredulous when he heard about my strange experiences.
- 13) My father raised me to be incredulous so that I would never get taken by scam artists.



Name _____

Date _____

Using Contextual Clues—Part 3

- 1) Sylvia felt enraptured by the heavenly dessert.
- 2) He was so enraptured by her on their first date that he just knew she was the girl for him.
- 3) Winning the lottery was quite a windfall.
- 4) She felt like the luckiest woman on earth; she knew that this job would turn out to be the biggest windfall of her life.
- 5) He wasn't sure if he would be proficient at his new position.
- 6) John practiced for months to become proficient at surfing.
- 7) His proficiency at public speaking helped him become elected to office.
- 8) This paint job is mediocre and I want you to redo it.
- 9) She was afraid that if she didn't pursue her dream of dancing her life would be filled with mediocrity.
- 10) I couldn't get him to divulge his secret.
- 11) Will you divulge the reason that you left without saying goodbye?
- 12) He didn't want to invalidate her feelings, but he just felt he couldn't be bothered.
- 13) Go see that man in the blue cap—he will validate your parking ticket.
- 14) I don't really think that your excuse is valid.
- 15) I want to see another doctor to find out if he'll corroborate your diagnosis.
- 16) Is she going to corroborate your story or will she contradict what you told me?





Reading Comprehension Obfuscations

Available in the format below:



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Obfuscations

Students that groan when asked to work on their vocabulary skills often love to do word puzzles. Just don't tell them the puzzles improve their vocabulary! This activity includes obfuscations of common idioms for students to solve, such as "at the decline of a cranial ornamentation" (at the drop of a hat) and "a portion of drum-shaped confection" (a piece of cake). Next, they are provided with a list of common idioms from which they can create their own obfuscations. Created obfuscations can be enjoyed among fellow students as classmates try to solve each other's concoctions. I have found that students really enjoy both these tasks, while getting substantial practice using a thesaurus and dictionary, and learning the meaning of less familiar idioms. Includes an answer key.

Name _____

Date _____

Obfuscations

Definition of obfuscate: To confuse or bewilder, to make obscure or unclear.

Directions: Translate the following obfuscations into familiar idioms.

(Note: Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus can help!)

Example: *"Inquisitiveness murdered the feline"* means *"Curiosity killed the cat"*

At the decline of a cranial ornamentation _____

A blazing tuber _____

Nonpareil of twain macrocosms _____

Consecration in masquerade _____

You shouldn't evaluate a tome from its sheath _____

Acting as Satan's helping hand _____

End the life of a pair of warm-blooded, feathered vertebrae using a singular, small geological specimen _____

Upon the balustrade _____

A portion of drum-shaped confection _____

View ocular organ to ocular organ _____

Talk of the supreme spirit of evil _____

Overlook the vessel for transport by water _____

Your opinion reached on the basis of probability is as splendid as the one belonging to me

On one occasion in a primary color between green and violet in the visible spectrum

Earth's natural satellite _____

Now go back and discuss the meanings of each idiom you translated.



Now it's your chance to create your own obfuscations.

(Note: Using a thesaurus and/or dictionary will help tremendously!)

Directions: Create obfuscations for the following familiar idioms.

A penny for your thoughts

Actions speak louder than words

Add insult to injury

Back to the drawing board

The ball is in your court

Barking up the wrong tree

The best thing since sliced bread

Bite off more than you can chew

Caught between a rock and a hard place

Costs an arm and a leg

Cross that bridge when you come to it

Don't cry over spilt milk

Don't give up your day job

Don't put all your eggs in one basket

Desperate times call for desperate measures

Elvis has left the building

Every cloud has a silver lining

Feeling a bit under the weather

Give the benefit of the doubt

Heard it through the grapevine

Hit the nail on the head

In the heat of the moment



Creating Obfuscations (cont.)

It takes two to tango

That was the last straw

Let sleeping dogs lie

Let the cat out of the bag

To make a long story short

Method to my madness

Pull the wool over your eyes

A picture's worth a thousand words

Steal someone's thunder

Get a taste of your own medicine

I wouldn't be caught dead

The Devil's in the details

Better late than never

Think outside the box

It's not rocket science

Pull someone's leg

Nothing ventured nothing gained

Now see if others can translate your obfuscations!

And go back and discuss the meanings of each idiom translated.



Obfuscations—Answer Key

Definition of obfuscate: To confuse or bewilder, to make obscure or unclear.

Directions: Translate the following obfuscations into familiar idioms.

(Note: Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus can help!)

Example: “*Inquisitiveness murdered the feline*” means “*Curiosity killed the cat*”

At the decline of a cranial ornamentation—At the drop of a hat (without any hesitation)

A blazing tuber—A hot potato (a highly controversial issue that’s risky to discuss)

Nonpareil of twain macrocosms—Best of both worlds (all the advantages)

Consecration in masquerade—Blessing in disguise (something good that isn’t recognized at first)

You shouldn’t evaluate a tome from its sheath—Don’t judge a book by its cover (you shouldn’t judge something based solely on its appearance)

Acting as Satan’s helping hand—Playing Devil’s advocate (presenting a counter argument)

End the life of a pair of warm-blooded, feathered vertebrae using a singular, small geological specimen—Kill two birds with one stone (accomplish two different things with one action)

Upon the balustrade—On the fence (stuck between two courses of action when making a decision)

A portion of drum-shaped confection—A piece of cake (simple, easy)

View ocular organ to ocular organ—See eye to eye (agree on something)

Talk of the supreme spirit of evil—Speak of the Devil (the person you have just been talking about arrives)

Overlook the vessel for transport by water—Miss the boat (miss your chance)

Your opinion reached on the basis of probability is as splendid as the one belonging to me—Your guess is as good as mine (to have no idea)

On one occasion in a primary color between green and violet in the visible spectrum earth’s natural satellite—Once in a blue moon (happens very rarely)





Reading Comprehension

Paraphrases and Meanings

Available in the format below:



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Paraphrases and Meanings

These worksheets enhance students' comprehension of subtle meanings, consequently improving their ability to paraphrase. Two separate worksheets provide students with pairs and groups of paraphrases, requiring them to identify and discuss subtle differences in meaning between and among the paraphrases. Students must rely on their ability to really break down and comprehend the meanings within sentences conveyed by verb tense, synonyms, adverbs, conceptual relationships such as causality or contrast, and more. Answer keys are included.

Name _____

Date _____

Shades of Meaning

Directions: Discuss the subtle differences in meaning between the paraphrases.

- 1) I want to always live in a warm, sunny place.
I don't ever want to live in a cold and rainy place.
- 2) I went ice-skating last week.
I'd been going ice-skating last week.
- 3) I remembered that I was supposed to pick up my dry cleaning yesterday.
I didn't pick up my dry cleaning yesterday.
I picked up my dry cleaning yesterday.
- 4) My hair is getting too long.
I need to get a haircut.
I wish I had short hair.
- 5) Susan said she'd let me know if she can come to the party.
Susan couldn't say yet whether or not she can come to the party.
- 6) I hope it's not raining tomorrow because we're planning a picnic.
If it rains tomorrow our picnic will be ruined.
- 7) Today I will go to the store.
Today I hope to get to the store.
I'm planning on going to the store.
- 8) There are very few things I like about my job but I do like working with sharp knives.
The only thing I like about my job is that I get to work with sharp knives.
One of the good things about my job is that I get to work with sharp knives.
- 9) I hate Thanksgiving.
I really despise Thanksgiving.
Thanksgiving is probably my least favorite holiday.
- 10) I can't believe he said that.
Can you believe he said that?
- 11) The next time you're at the store pick up some chocolate for me, okay?
Will you get me some chocolate from the store?
- 12) That pasta was the best I've ever had!
That pasta is the best in the world!

Shades of Meaning—Answer Key

Directions: Discuss the subtle differences in meaning between the paraphrases.

- 1) I want to always live in a warm, sunny place.
I don't ever want to live in a cold and rainy place.
(The second speaker could be okay with living in a cold and sunny place or a warm and rainy place, whereas the first speaker would not.)
- 2) I went ice-skating last week.
I'd been going ice-skating last week.
(The second statement sounds like the speaker went ice-skating more than once.)
- 3) I remembered that I was supposed to pick up my dry cleaning yesterday.
I didn't pick up my dry cleaning yesterday.
I picked up my dry cleaning yesterday.
(The first speaker may or may not have actually picked up the dry cleaning; for example, she may have remembered but then something prevented her from actually getting it. The second and third speakers' statements are opposites.)
- 4) My hair is getting too long.
I need to get a haircut.
I wish I had short hair.
(The third speaker could be bald, while the second speaker might need a haircut for a reason other than having hair that is too long; for example, maybe she just wants to go from a blunt cut to a layered one.)
- 5) Susan said she'd let me know if she can come to the party.
Susan couldn't say yet whether or not she can come to the party.
(In the second statement it's implied that Susan will RSVP, but not definite as in the first sentence.)
- 6) I hope it's not raining tomorrow because we're planning a picnic.
If it rains tomorrow our picnic will be ruined.
(In the first statement the picnic will not necessarily be ruined.)



- 7) Today I will go to the store.
Today I hope to get to the store.
I'm planning on going to the store.
(The first statement is the most definite, and the third statement does not specify which day.)
- 8) There are very few things I like about my job but I do like working with sharp knives.
The only thing I like about my job is that I get to work with sharp knives.
One of the good things about my job is that I get to work with sharp knives.
(The first speaker likes few things, the second speaker likes only one thing, and the third speaker might like many things.)
- 9) I hate Thanksgiving.
I really despise Thanksgiving.
Thanksgiving is probably my least favorite holiday.
(The second speaker has stronger negative feelings than the first, and the third speaker might actually like Thanksgiving, just not as much as the other holidays.)
- 10) I can't believe he said that.
Can you believe he said that?
(A statement vs. a question: the second speaker doesn't definitively say whether he believes or not.)
- 11) The next time you're at the store pick up some chocolate for me, okay?
Will you get me some chocolate from the store?
(The second speaker makes a stronger request and sounds like he wants it soon.)
- 12) That pasta was the best I've ever had!
That pasta is the best in the world!
(In the first statement there could be better pasta somewhere in the world.)



Name _____

Date _____

Shades of Meaning—2

Directions: Discuss the subtle differences in meaning between the paraphrases.

- 1) Yesterday there was an event at the supermarket.
Yesterday there was an incident at the supermarket.
- 2) The doctor dismissed my symptoms as nerves.
The doctor said my symptoms were from nerves.
- 3) Sophie quietly yawned.
Sophie silently yawned.
Sophie self-consciously yawned.
- 4) Bill reluctantly hung up the phone.
Bill regrettably hung up the phone.
- 5) The little girl clutched the grocery list.
The little girl held the grocery list.
- 6) Justin sped down the mountain slope.
Justin skied down the mountain slope.
- 7) Andrea felt content.
Andrea felt happy.
Andrea was amused.
Andrea felt enthusiastic.
Andrea was enthusiastic.
- 8) The old guy staggered down the road.
The old guy walked down the road.
- 9) The robbers chose the house on the corner.
The robbers targeted the house on the corner.
- 10) Kathy slipped on the ice.
Kathy skidded on the ice.
- 11) When she was three, Susan had a huge temper tantrum at the park.
When she was three, Susan had a huge meltdown at the park.
- 12) I misplaced the money for the flea market.
I lost the money for the flea market.
I lost the clothes for the flea market.
I lost the clothes from the flea market.

Shades of Meaning—2—Answer Key

Directions: Discuss the subtle differences in meaning between the paraphrases.

- 1) Yesterday there was an event at the supermarket.
Yesterday there was an incident at the supermarket. (implies negativity)
- 2) The doctor dismissed my symptoms as nerves. (implies a dismissive attitude)
The doctor said my symptoms were from nerves.
- 3) Sophie quietly yawned. (could be some sound)
Sophie silently yawned.
Sophie self-consciously yawned. (means she felt self-conscious)
- 4) Bill reluctantly hung up the phone.
Bill regrettably hung up the phone. (implies regret, not reluctance)
- 5) The little girl clutched the grocery list. (implies she was holding on tightly)
The little girl held the grocery list.
- 6) Justin sped down the mountain slope. (implies speed)
Justin skied down the mountain slope.
- 7) Andrea felt content. (a milder feeling than happiness)
Andrea felt happy.
Andrea was amused. (adds a feeling of slight humor)
Andrea felt enthusiastic.
Andrea was enthusiastic. (could imply enthusiastic behavior, more than just feeling)
- 8) The old guy staggered down the road. (implies difficulty walking)
The old guy walked down the road.
- 9) The robbers chose the house on the corner.
The robbers targeted the house on the corner. (could imply that the house was already burglarized more so than the 1st statement)
- 10) Kathy slipped on the ice.
Kathy skidded on the ice. (“slipped” implies actually falling more so than “skidded”)
- 11) When she was three, Susan had a huge temper tantrum at the park. (implies anger)
When she was three, Susan had a huge meltdown at the park.
(emotional but not necessarily angry)
- 12) I misplaced the money for the flea market. (speaker may or may not know where it is)
I lost the money for the flea market. (sounds more like the speaker doesn’t know)
I lost the clothes for the flea market. (clothes to sell)
I lost the clothes from the flea market. (clothes that were bought)



Reading Comprehension

Conceptual Relationships

Available in the format below:



Learn Quickly!
Learn For Life!

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Conceptual Relationships

This two-page worksheet helps middle school and high school students understand conceptual relationships between words and between sentences, including causality, contradiction, elaboration, and specificity. Students are first presented with examples of pairs of words and the conceptual relationship between each pair, and then must determine the conceptual relationship between more pairs of words. Finally, students engage in different fill-in-the-blank exercises to determine relationships and to demonstrate relationships. Understanding conceptual relationships is so important to students' overall comprehension of both written and verbally presented content. Includes an answer key.

Name _____

Date _____

Conceptual Relationships

Words have meanings.

Two words have two meanings.

There is a relationship between those meanings.

Examples: hot...cold, up...down, fast...slow (opposites)
teacher...school, cop...precinct (worker and place of work)
fire...hot, cheetah...fast (noun and adjective describing that noun)

What is the relationship between the following sets of pairs?

1) bird...nest, bat...cave, bee...hive

2) doctor...stethoscope, conductor...baton, mechanic...wrench

3) window...square, earth...round, movie poster...rectangular

4) fruit...apple, vehicle...helicopter, animal...leopard

Sentences have meanings; they state ideas or concepts.

Two sentences in a row have a relationship between their ideas/concepts.

The second sentence's concept relates to the first sentence's concept in some way.

For example, the second sentence's concept may contradict, state an effect, state a cause, or give an example of the first sentence's concept.

First sentence: **My cat is getting really fat.**

Second sentence:	He is really losing weight.	(contradicts)
	He can barely get up the stairs.	(states an effect)
	He is eating too much food.	(states a cause)
	He weighs nineteen pounds!	(gives an example)

Directions: Write four sentences that have the following relationships to the first.

First sentence: **I am scared of flying.**

Second sentence: _____ (contradicts)

_____ (states an effect)

_____ (states a cause)

_____ (gives an example)

Conceptual Relationships—Answer Key

Words have meanings.

Two words have two meanings.

There is a relationship between those meanings.

Examples: hot...cold, up...down, fast...slow (opposites)
 teacher...school, cop...precinct (worker and place of work)
 fire...hot, cheetah...fast (noun and adjective describing that noun)

What is the relationship between the following sets of pairs?

- 1) bird...nest, bat...cave, bee...hive
 an animal and where it lives
- 2) doctor...stethoscope, conductor...baton, mechanic...wrench
 a worker and an object he or she uses for work
- 3) window...square, earth...round, movie poster...rectangular
 an object and its shape
- 4) fruit...apple, vehicle...helicopter, animal...leopard
 a category and an item within that category

Sentences have meanings; they state ideas or concepts.

Two sentences in a row have a **relationship** between their ideas/concepts.

The second sentence's concept **relates** to the first sentence's concept in some way.

For example, the second sentence's concept may contradict, state an effect, state a cause, or give an example of the first sentence's concept.

First sentence: **My cat is getting really fat.**

Second sentence: He is really losing weight.	(contradicts)
He can barely get up the stairs.	(states an effect)
He is eating too much food.	(states a cause)
He weighs nineteen pounds!	(gives an example)

First sentence: **I am scared of flying.**

(Note: The following answers are examples; many sentences would work.)

Second sentence: <u>I love to fly.</u>	(contradicts)
<u>I have to drive to visit my grandma in Ohio.</u>	(states an effect)
<u>When I was little, my uncle died in a plane crash.</u>	(states a cause)
<u>The last time I flew my hands shook from fear.</u>	(gives an example)

Name _____

Date _____

Conceptual Relationships between Sentences

What does each second sentence do in relation to the first sentence?

Choose from:	contradicts	(says the opposite)
	states an effect	(states a result)
	states a cause	(gives the reason)
	gives an example	(gives more specific info)

First sentence: **My grandma is really sweet.**

Second sentence: I love going to visit her. _____
She always bakes me cookies. _____
She is super mean. _____
Her parents were very loving. _____

First sentence: **I am doing well in algebra.**

Second sentence: I am struggling in algebra. _____
I study an hour every night. _____
I aced the last three tests. _____
My parents are proud of me. _____

First sentence: **I love to eat fruit.**

Second sentence: I love sweet, fresh foods. _____
Yuck—I hate all fruit! _____
Nectarines are my favorite. _____
I eat fruit salad every day. _____

First sentence: The Summit School is a great place to learn.

Second sentence: The teachers are very helpful and the students are always accepting of each other. _____

First sentence: Anthony and his sister never got along.

Second sentence: One time they actually got into a fistfight! _____

First sentence: Fall is my favorite season.

Second sentence: I'm always sad to see the leaves falling off the trees and I miss going to the beach. _____

First sentence: I am scared of flying.

Second sentence: I had to drive across the country for my new job. _____

Third sentence (in relation to second): It took me six days. _____

Conceptual Relationships between Sentences

Answer Key

What does each second sentence do in relation to the first sentence?

Choose from: contradicts	(says the opposite)
states an effect	(states a result)
states a cause	(gives the reason)
gives an example	(gives more specific info)

(Note: Some second sentences could fit more than one choice)

First sentence: **My grandma is really sweet.**

Second sentence: I love going to visit her	<u>states an effect</u>
She always bakes me cookies.	<u>gives an example</u>
She is super mean.	<u>contradicts</u>
Her parents were very loving.	<u>states a cause</u>

First sentence: **I am doing well in algebra.**

Second sentence: I am struggling in algebra.	<u>contradicts</u>
I study an hour every night.	<u>states a cause</u>
I aced the last three tests.	<u>gives an example</u>
My parents are proud of me.	<u>states an effect</u>

First sentence: **I love to eat fruit.**

Second sentence: I love sweet, fresh foods.	<u>states a cause</u>
Yuck—I hate all fruit!	<u>contradicts</u>
Nectarines are my favorite.	<u>gives an example</u>
I eat fruit salad every day.	<u>states an effect</u>

First sentence: The Summit School is a great place to learn.

Second sentence: The teachers are very helpful and the students are very kind.
gives an example/states a cause

First sentence: Anthony and his sister never got along.

Second sentence: One time they actually got into a fistfight! gives an example

First sentence: Fall is my favorite season.

Second sentence: I'm sad to see the leaves falling off the trees and I miss the beach.
contradicts

First sentence: I am scared of flying.

Second sentence: I had to drive across the country for my new job. states an effect

Third sentence (in relation to second): It took me six days. gives an example



Reading Comprehension

Conceptual Relationships

Advanced

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Conceptual Relationships: Advanced

This worksheet and accompanying answer key continue where the first conceptual relationships worksheet left off, again requiring students to determine and demonstrate conceptual relationships between sentences. However, with this worksheet, students are presented with sentences containing higher-level vocabulary, more complex syntax, and more sophisticated concepts.

Name _____

Date _____

Conceptual Relationships: Advanced

What does the second sentence do in relation to the first sentence?

Choose from: adds specificity

contradicts

(says the opposite)

contrasts

(says how something else is different)

clarifies

(makes clear)

adds to a sequence

states an effect

(a result)

states a cause

(a reason)

gives an example

- 1) Very often, we publish articles in The Summit Sun that are celebratory and discuss joyful moments.
But life, though it may be filled with happy moments, also has its moments of grief and tragedy. _____
- 2) The first time I interviewed Joe, he told me, "If you treat people well and don't shortchange anyone, you can stay in business for a long time."
Joe lived by these ideas, showing respect for all. _____
- 3) At first I was skeptical upon seeing trailers for the movie *Mama*.
My previous experiences with horror movies have been, for the most part, not great.

- 4) Since the name Guillermo del Toro was associated with it, I thought it would be good.
Unfortunately, this was not the case. _____
- 5) This movie's plot is disappointing.
It spends an awfully long time on standard horror movie jump scenes.

- 6) However, *Mama* does have a few positive aspects.
The special effects are solid and the acting is good enough. _____
- 7) On Tuesday, President Obama gave his State of the Union Address to Congress, the first one of his second term.
While covering a wide range of issues, his speech focused primarily on the struggling and uncertain economy. _____
- 8) While it's likely he'll get sufficient votes to pass new gun legislation, a potential filibuster in the Senate could prevent changes from coming to fruition.
Thus, Obama begged Congress to at least let the changes come to a vote.

- 9) Obama also urged Congress to craft legislation to give polluters economic incentive to reduce gas emissions.
He continued, somewhat controversially stating, "If Congress won't act soon to protect future generations, I will." _____



Conceptual Relationships: Advanced—Answer Key

What does the second sentence do in relation to the first sentence?

Choose from: adds specificity

contradicts	(says the opposite)
contrasts	(says how something else is different)
clarifies	(makes clear)
adds to a sequence	
states an effect	(a result)
states a cause	(a reason)
gives an example	

- 1) Very often, we publish articles in The Summit Sun that are celebratory and discuss joyful moments.
But life, though it may be filled with happy moments, also has its moments of grief and tragedy. contrasts
- 2) The first time I interviewed Joe, he told me, “If you treat people well and don’t shortchange anyone, you can stay in business for a long time.”
Joe lived by these ideas, showing respect for all. gives an example
- 3) At first I was skeptical upon seeing trailers for the movie *Mama*.
My previous experiences with horror movies have been, for the most part, not great. states a cause
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Unfortunately, this was not the case. contradicts
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It spends an awfully long time on standard horror movie jump scenes. states a cause
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Thus, Obama begged Congress to at least let the changes come to a vote. states an effect
- 9) Obama also urged Congress to craft legislation to give polluters economic incentive to reduce gas emissions.
He continued, somewhat controversially stating, “If Congress won’t act soon to protect future generations, I will.” adds specificity



Reading Comprehension

Identifying Main Idea

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Identifying Main Idea

I had always found teaching students how to identify main ideas particularly difficult, until I discovered that providing them with examples works best. Here, I break down the non-fiction article "Friend" by Marjorie Ingall into its ten paragraphs. For each paragraph, students are given three choices for the main idea. One choice is too general, one is too specific, and one is "just right". In this way, students can discover (often through discussion) how the "too general" choice may be true, but is not specific enough to convey the author's intended message; how the "too specific" choice includes extraneous details that are not needed to convey the message; and how the "just right" choice clearly encapsulates the message. In future sessions when my students are tasked with independently identifying main ideas of new content, we can discuss how their guesses may be too general or too specific, and they are then able to make adjustments until they arrive at an accurate statement of the main idea.

FRIEND

To My Pal Who Hit Career Gold: You Go Girl (I'll Try to Control My Raging Jealousy)

by Marjorie Ingall

Paragraph 1

"We hate it when our friends become successful," Morrissey sang, back in the day. I never thought I'd take emotional cues from a mopey British pop star with vertical hair. I'm a generally cheerful American woman. But when a longtime friend did become hugely successful, I was shocked at my dark, seething jealousy.

Paragraph 2

Gayle and I came of age together as writers for teen magazines. She was hilarious and kind. She giggled to me once about chatting with a guy on the subway carrying a wombat in a box. I thought, there are two kinds of people in the world: the kind who strike up conversations with people carrying wombats in boxes, and the kind who don't. She and I, we were wombat people.

Paragraph 3

Years passed I continued to write for magazines and newspapers; she became a struggling novelist. We had kids. We had writing dates and made elaborate yet cheap salads for each other. Her first novel sank without a trace; I tried to console her.

Paragraph 4

And then her second novel became a sensation. It sold millions of copies, was translated into zillions of languages, became a movie. She attended the premiere in Hollywood, wearing a glamorous low-cut black silk tux, as I watched at home, cleaning crayon off the walls.

Paragraph 5

She'd call and share stories of her life, as she always had. I told her of my writer's block. But all the while, my envy lurked in the background like a horror-movie villain. My answers became increasingly curt, our conversation filled with awkward pauses.



Paragraph 6

I hadn't known I was this petty. How could I not be overjoyed for her? She was my friend; she'd worked hard for her success. And I realized something else about myself, something equally unsavory: In the past, when I felt conflicted about a relationship, I'd ghosted. Rather than talking about problems like a grown-up, I'd simply disappear. I'd done it to two different boyfriends and a good friend. They'd call, likely hurt and baffled, and I'd check caller ID and ignore them. There's a difference between being conflict-averse and being a jerk. I was the jerk.

Paragraph 7

So I womanned up and called Gayle. "I'm sorry," I said. "I need to tell you that I feel jealous of you and I don't want to talk to you and I hate myself for it." She expelled a huge breath. "I didn't want to say anything until you did! I'm so glad we're bringing it into the open!" She encouraged me to unload all the ugly stuff I had inside me, and she listened without judgment. It felt purifying.

Paragraph 8

She'd been on the receiving end of friend breakups before, she told me, and didn't want it to happen to us. She made me swear I'd tell her if she started acting like a jerk. (She didn't, though she sometimes got obsessive and self-righteous—flaws she'd always had. And I told her so.) It turns out that friendship, like marriage, requires honest communication even when it's hard. Jeez, who knew?

Paragraph 9

Wealth didn't change her. Her money woes were lessened, true, but she still had legit anxiety about...everything else. I could reassure her. She could reassure me. It's what friends do. As ever, Gayle's my biggest cheerleader.

Paragraph 10

Studies have shown that people who are grateful for their friends tend to be better friends in response, creating, in the words of social psychologists, a "positive-feedback loop." That's us.

Name _____

Date _____

Main Ideas – Too General vs. Too Specific vs. Just Right

In order to identify the main idea of a paragraph, an essay, a story, or an article, you must consider: What is the message the author is trying to convey? The main idea must be specific enough to convey the intended message, but should not include unnecessary details.

- Directions:
- 1) Read the article “Friend” by Marjorie Ingall
 - 2) Consider the main message within each paragraph
 - 3) Label the following main ideas as:
TG—too general
TS—too specific
JR—just right

Paragraph 1

- ___ I became jealous of a friend’s success
- ___ People don’t like it when their friends become successful
- ___ I was shocked by my extreme jealousy of a longtime friend’s huge success because I’m usually an easy-going woman who lives in the United States

Paragraph 2

- ___ Gayle and I both were the types who giggle over wombats in the subway
- ___ Gayle and I were close, longtime friends who shared an outgoing nature and profession
- ___ Gayle and I were friends

Paragraph 3

- ___ Years passed and we remained friends through life changes
- ___ Life changes as we get older
- ___ I wrote for magazines while she was a struggling novelist

Paragraph 4

- ___ Gayle’s second novel became a movie and she wore a glamorous outfit to the movie’s premiere
- ___ Gayle’s life and my life moved in different directions
- ___ Gayle became very successful professionally while my professional life stagnated

Paragraph 5

- ___ My jealousy started to get in the way of our friendship
- ___ We started to have problems in our relationship
- ___ She continued to call me, but I had writer's block

Paragraph 6

- ___ I'd ghosted two boyfriends and a good friend in the past when problems developed in those relationships
- ___ I started to realize that ghosting Gayle because of my jealousy of her was a jerky move on my part
- ___ My lack of communication was immature

Paragraph 7

- ___ Gayle reacted well when I was honest with her about my jealousy
- ___ Honesty is always the best policy
- ___ I womanned up and called Gayle and apologized for being jealous and told her I hate myself for it

Paragraph 8

- ___ Relationships benefit from honest communication, even when it's hard
- ___ I told Gayle how sometimes she could be obsessive and self-righteous
- ___ Honesty is good

Paragraph 9

- ___ Friends can reassure each other
- ___ It turns out Gayle's life isn't perfect, just like mine, and as friends we can be each other's cheerleaders
- ___ Gayle's wealth didn't change her and she still had anxiety about many things in her life

Paragraph 10

- ___ A positive-feedback loop is when you do something positive for someone who then appreciates it and does something positive for you and so on
- ___ Many studies investigate friendship dynamics
- ___ Gayle and I learned to be grateful for our friendship, a dynamic that typically makes for better friendships

Identifying Main Idea – Answer Key

In order to identify the main idea of a paragraph, an essay, a story, or an article, you must consider: What is the message the author is trying to convey? The main idea must be specific enough to convey the intended message, but should not include unnecessary details.

- Directions:
- 1) Read the article “Friend” by Marjorie Ingall
 - 2) Consider the main message within each paragraph
 - 3) Label the following main ideas as: **TG**—too general
TS—too specific
JR—just right

Paragraph 1

- JR** I became jealous of a friend’s success
TG People don’t like it when their friends become successful
TS I was shocked by my extreme jealousy of a longtime friend’s huge success because I’m usually an easy-going woman who lives in the United States

Paragraph 2

- TS** Gayle and I both were the types who giggle over wombats in the subway
JR Gayle and I were close, longtime friends who shared an outgoing nature and profession
TG Gayle and I were friends

Paragraph 3

- JR** Years passed and we remained friends through life changes
TG Life changes as we get older
TS I wrote for magazines while she was a struggling novelist

Paragraph 4

- TS** Gayle’s second novel became a movie and she wore a glamorous outfit to the movie’s premiere
TG Gayle’s life and my life moved in different directions
JR Gayle became very successful professionally while my professional life stagnated

Paragraph 5

JR My jealousy started to get in the way of our friendship

TG We started to have problems in our relationship

TS She continued to call me, but I had writer's block

Paragraph 6

TS I'd ghosted two boyfriends and a good friend in the past when problems developed in those relationships

JR I started to realize that ghosting Gayle because of my jealousy of her was a jerky move on my part

TG My lack of communication was immature

Paragraph 7

JR Gayle reacted well when I was honest with her about my jealousy

TG Honesty is always the best policy

TS I womaned up and called Gayle and apologized for being jealous and told her I hate myself for it

Paragraph 8

JR Relationships benefit from honest communication, even when it's hard

TS I told Gayle how sometimes she could be obsessive and self-righteous

TG Honesty is good

Paragraph 9

TG Friends can reassure each other

JR It turns out Gayle's life isn't perfect, just like mine, and as friends we can be each other's cheerleaders

TS Gayle's wealth didn't change her and she still had anxiety about many things in her life

Paragraph 10

TS A positive-feedback loop is when you do something positive for someone who then appreciates it and does something positive for you and so on

TG Many studies investigate friendship dynamics

JR Gayle and I learned to be grateful for our friendship, a dynamic that typically makes for better friendships



Reading Comprehension

Leisure Time Language Input

Available in the format below:



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Leisure Time Language Input Homework Assignment

So many parents and students believe the only way to expand vocabulary, reasoning skills, language comprehension, and general knowledge outside of the classroom is by reading novels or resource books. I always explain to my students and their parents that there are so many other sources of content that lead to language improvement, including ones that a child or teenager may actually enjoy reading or viewing! This homework handout requires that students read or view a choice of language content sources, and then fill in a brief summary of that content. An included discussion explains the how and why, along with a description of recommended sources. By the way, it's called "Leisure Time Language Input" rather than "Leisure Time Reading" because taking in language auditorily can improve a person's language comprehension and expression just as well as taking it in through reading, and is in fact a more effective means of input for students with decoding deficits.

Name _____

Due date _____

Leisure Time Language Input Homework

Check one of the following:

_____ I read an article on digg.com / on _____ (circle one)

_____ I watched a video on Vsauce / ted.com / digg.com / Nerdwriter1 (circle one)

_____ I watched a news / nature / science program / _____ (circle one)

_____ I watched a documentary on _____

Title:

Author(s) / Presenter(s) / Director(s):

Summary:

One interesting thing I learned:

One question I would ask the author(s) / presenter(s) / director(s):



Leisure Time Language Input: Discussion

So often parents of my high school students will ask what reading their children can do during leisure time to improve their language skills. I always tell them that the truth is their child doesn't have to read a novel or a textbook to improve his or her language skills. Any time they are exposed to language input that's somewhat intelligent they are improving their vocabulary, their syntax, their comprehension, their inferencing skills, their conceptual understanding, and their reasoning skills. Motivation is key! There are plenty of sources of intelligent discourse, including family discussions at the dinner table, in which a teenager could be interested. Forcing children to read, listen to, or watch material that doesn't interest them will only turn them off from learning.

As a speech language pathologist working at a Regents high school, I infrequently give my students homework, and when I do I give homework that requires little effort. I know that they receive tons of homework from their academic courses. But I talk to them about the benefit of taking in language during their leisure time on topics that interest them. And then I give them the preceding homework assignment after presenting them with a description (or showing them examples on my laptop) of the following sources:

digg.com—Has tons of interesting articles and videos on a variety of topics. Students can use the search bar to zero in on the topics that interest them the most. Articles vary significantly in length, so students who struggle with decoding have the option of choosing a video or a shorter article.

Nerdwriter1—My son turned me on to this one! The Nerdwriter presents video essays on his YouTube channel Nerdwriter1. His videos range in length from about 6-12 minutes, and present interpretations, analyses, and reviews of art, literature, television, and cinema, with titles including “How Emily Dickinson Writes a Poem”, “The Problem with DC Action Scenes”, and “Seinfeld: What Nothing Really Means”. These videos present interesting ideas using sophisticated language, but at a slower pace and accompanied by tons of visuals—making them terrific for students with any language deficits.

Vsauce—Also discovered by my son, a science lover. Michael Stevens is the creator and host of Vsauce, a YouTube channel comprised of short videos, usually 5-25 minutes, on a variety of science topics, including “Why is Yawning Contagious?”, “The Science of Awkwardness”, “The Most Dangerous Place on Earth”, “Which Way is Down?”, and “What if the Earth Stopped Spinning?” I'm not a science lover, yet I find these videos fascinating!

ted.com—I believe most people are familiar with TED Talks. This website has an immense collection of inspirational, educational, and thought-provoking videos of various lengths on a practically endless variety of topics. As with Digg, students can search for their favorite topics.

Note: I give my students the option of watching videos rather than reading content, since whichever way is easiest for them to take in language is fine.

Lastly, I discuss with my students sources of interesting programs, including PBS, science shows, nature shows, HBO and Netflix documentaries, C-Span, news shows, political debates, etc. Any time they are exposed to intelligent discussion they are improving their language skills.