

# 9 Awesome Classroom Activities That Teach Job Readiness Skills

Nine ways to help your teen students learn the job readiness skills they really need to succeed in life after school.

[Elizabeth Mulvahill](#) on September 13, 2016



When it's time to go to college or take a job, in addition to academic knowledge and vocational skills, students will also need those super-important qualities known as “soft skills,” otherwise known as job readiness skills.

Soft skills are those personal characteristics that help you function successfully as an individual (motivation, self-confidence and flexibility) as well as within a group (teamwork, negotiation and respect). When it comes to finding and maintaining employment and moving up the ladder, these skills

are key. After all, if you can't show up on time, speak up for yourself or get along with your peers, chances are you're not going to have a very smooth go of it.

Explicitly teaching your students these skills is the best way to give them valuable insight into their strengths and weaknesses as individuals as well as how they work best in a group setting. And what better time to teach them than the beginning of a new school year? Because we all know “being ready for a job” skills are also great “getting along at school” skills.

We found nine engaging lessons that are not only just right for teaching middle and high schoolers the soft skills they need, they're also a lot of fun!

For each activity below, a key part of learning the skills is reflection. Be sure to make time for students to talk (or write) about what they learned from each activity—what went right, how they felt while they were participating, and what they would do differently next time.

## **1. Right Way/Wrong Way Skits**



Sometimes a bad example is an even better teacher than a good one! Share the [20 Soft Skills Chart](#) with your class and have them quickly act out positive and negative scenarios for each skill. They'll learn a lot *and* have a lot of laughs!

## **SKILLS:**

Creativity, communication, critical thinking

## **HOW TO:**

Divide your class into small groups. Have each group choose one or more skills from the infographic. Give each group 20+ minutes to talk and think about their assigned skills. They can look the word up in the dictionary, talk about personal experiences or even go online for examples. Once they feel they have a clear understanding of their skill as a group, have them come up with a good way to explain it to their classmates as well as two ways to model the skill—once the “wrong” way and once the “right” way.

## **2. The Blindfold Game**

Teens leading one another around in blindfolds? Are we sure this is a good idea? The answer is yes when it's part of a structured, purposeful activity like this one. Blindfolded students will have to trust their partners as they are led through an obstacle course by their partner's verbal cues. Leading students will learn that their language needs to be clear and explicit and that sometimes giving instructions is not as easy as it seems!

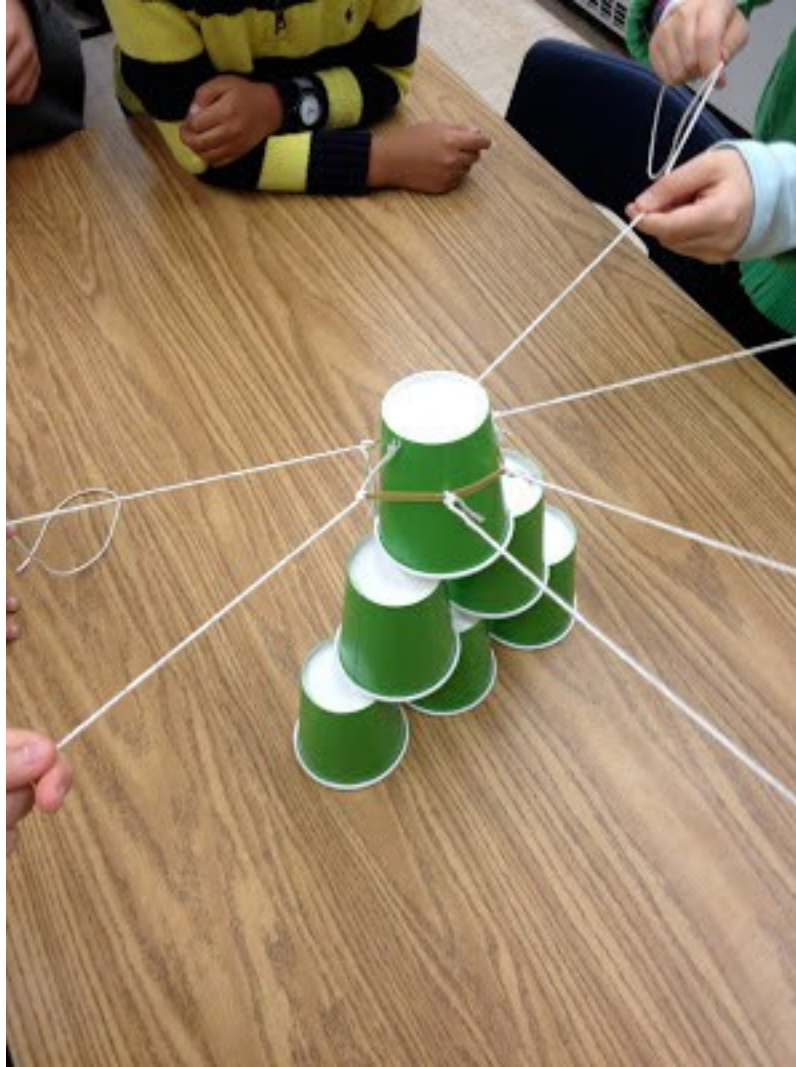
### **SKILLS:**

Communication, listening skills, respect (taking the task and their partner's safety seriously), flexibility

### **HOW TO:**

You will need a large space for this game (maybe the cafeteria after lunch or the gym on an off period), enough blindfolds for half of the participants, and furniture and other items that you can use as obstacles (cardboard boxes, pillows, chairs, tables). Scatter furniture and objects around the room before the activity begins. Your course should be challenging but safe to navigate. Pair students up and have them line up at one end of the room. One person from each pair should put on the blindfold. The sighted person must guide their partner across the room and give them clear oral instructions (but not touch them) to help them avoid the obstacles. When each team reaches the far side of the room, partners can switch roles and repeat the exercise. Have just a few pairs tackle the course at one time so that the others can observe. Take some time between rounds to process what went well, what didn't and what could make the challenge easier.

## **3. No-Hands Cup-Stacking Challenge**



### Source

This hands-on group challenge is an exercise in patience and perseverance, not to mention a total blast! Your students will be hooked from the first round. Using only strings and a rubber band, students must work together as a team to build a pyramid of paper cups. Sound simple? You'll be surprised at the amount of trial and error your teenagers will need before they get the hang of this activity.

### **SKILLS:**

Critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, teamwork, patience

### **HOW TO:**

Decide how many students you want in each group. Tie that many strings to a single rubber band. Each person in the group holds on to one of the strings that is attached to the rubber band, and as a group, they use this device to pick up the cups (by pulling the rubber band apart and then bringing it back

together over the cups) and place them on top of each other in order to build a pyramid. See more detailed instructions [here](#).

## **4. Time-Management Challenge**

We all have days when our huge list of tasks and the amount of time to complete them just don't seem to compute. When time is tight and your agenda is packed full, you've got to prioritize tasks and work efficiently! This activity gives students the opportunity to practice just that by presenting them with a large list of tasks and a limited time frame. They must decide the relative value and time commitment of each task in order to earn the most points. The complicating factor? They have to do it in teams!

### **SKILLS:**

Negotiation, critical thinking, communication, time management

### **HOW TO:**

Make a list on chart paper of a variety of tasks and a point value for each. For example: Do 25 jumping jacks (5 points), make up a nickname for each member of the group (5 points), get every person in the class to sign a piece of paper (15 points), form a conga line and conga from one end of the room to the other (5 points, 10 bonus points if anyone joins you), etc. Make sure you list more than enough tasks to take up 10 minutes. Divide your students into groups of five or six and give them 10 minutes to collect as many points as they can by deciding which tasks to perform. A debriefing session is essential with this game. Guide your students to think about how they made decisions, what group dynamics came into play and how they determined the value of each task.

## **5. Listen and Recap**



### Source

There are so many things competing for kids' attention in today's overstimulating world, so learning the simple art of listening can be a difficult task. This one-on-one communication activity will help students practice taking the time to clear their minds, focus and *really* listen to what their partner is saying in a way that they can clearly and accurately repeat it back to them.

### **SKILLS:**

Listening, respect, interpersonal skills, communication

### **HOW TO:**

Divide students into pairs. Partner one draws a topic card from a prepared deck and talks about that topic while partner two listens without speaking. The listener must really focus on simply receiving their partner's words—not letting their mind wander or think about how they are going to respond. Then, without rebuttal, partner two recaps what partner one said. Then they switch roles.

## **6. Team Survival Challenge**



What would happen if your class went out on a pleasure cruise only to end up being shipwrecked on a desert island? What materials would be essential for survival? If you're a fan of the TV series "Lost," you know making these decisions as a group can get ugly fast. This activity is a great lesson in group decision-making as students will undoubtedly have different ideas of what materials to add to a limited list in a limited amount of time.

### **SKILLS:**

Critical-thinking skills, negotiation, communication, teamwork

### **HOW TO:**

Download this [PDF from Realityworks](#) for the entire lesson, including a brainstorming graphic organizer "Benefits of Teamwork," a Teamwork Skill Self-Inventory and the complete Team Survival Scenario.

## **7. Four Card Negotiation**

Sometimes to get ahead in life, you have to know how to wheel and deal to get what you need.

When the cards you're dealt do not make up a complete deck, you need to go out into the world and negotiate with others to put the pieces together. This is literally what this lesson is all about. The objective is for teams to trade and barter for pieces of cards to match up with the pieces they already have and



ultimately end up with four complete playing cards.

## **SKILLS:**

Negotiation, communication, interpersonal skills

## **HOW TO:**

Start with a pile of playing cards (four cards per team of four or five students). Cut each card diagonally into four pieces and mix all of the pieces together. Now divide the mixed-up pieces evenly among the teams. Give teams a couple of minutes to sort out their card pieces to figure out which pieces they have and which pieces are missing. Set a timer for 10 minutes. The goal of the game is for the students to use their negotiating skills with the other teams in order to gain as many complete cards as possible for their team. At the end of 10 minutes, the team with the most cards wins.

## **8. The Human Knot**



[Source](#)

Nothing promotes cooperation like getting all tangled up with your classmates ... literally! Students will start in a circle and join each hand with a different person, the whole group ending up in a twisted mess. The fun begins when they start to negotiate escaping the tangle without letting go of one another's hands—it will definitely take working together.

### **SKILLS:**

Teamwork, communication, problem-solving

### **HOW TO:**

To play, players stand in a circle and reach out to shake hands with other players, with each hand connecting to a different person, creating a “human knot.” Then the players have to figure out how to unthread their bodies without letting go of each other's hands. This is another great activity that lends itself to a vibrant debriefing session as students observe how they communicated with one another, who cooperated and what strategies worked best.

## **9. Problem-Solving Scenarios Challenge**

School, work, relationships—bumps along the road occasionally occur in every arena of life. Learning to successfully navigate these bumps takes some problem-solving savviness. Teach your students the steps of successful problem-solving and then watch them apply their new skills with six real-life work problem scenarios.

### **SKILLS:**

Problem-solving, communication, critical thinking, respect

### **HOW TO:**

[Download this PDF](#)

You'll get resources for Seven Steps to Solving a Problem Effectively, a Problem Solving Organizer, and 6 different workplace problem-solving scenarios for your students to try.