



**Curriculum: Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

**Module:** Social Communication Skills

Level: Elementary

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify the difference between healthy social communication and unhealthy social communication, to identify expressive and receptive language, and sort proper from improper social interactions.

**Course Intent:** Students will be introduced to social communication techniques, taught ways in which to apply them, and provided with opportunities to engage in practice exercises with peers to enhance their social communication skills.

**Useful Applications & Benefits:** Some children develop social communication skills naturally and without an effort, while other students do not. Social skills are what we need to interact with one another adaptively. Communication skills are important to our emotional health and our sense of well-being.

**Course Snapshot**

This course incorporates the following lessons.

	<b><u>Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Time Required</u></b>	<b><u>Resources and Materials Needed</u></b>
Introductory Lesson: What is Social Communication?	Storytelling, active listening, and asking questions	15 – 20 minutes	None
Lesson 2: Social Skills	Adaptive Language exercise	15 – 20 minutes	None
Lesson 3: Recognizing Emotions	Demonstrating Facial Expressions	15 – 20 minutes	None
Lesson 4: Using Descriptive Language	Descriptive Language Story Telling	15 – 20 minutes	None



### **Lesson Rationale:**

When children struggle with social interactions, it can result in difficulties in making friends. Without friendships, children may feel lonely, left out, and unhappy. It can also result in a lack of acceptance by their peers and even being ostracized. This, in turn, can contribute to students' distress as well as negatively affect their academic performance and desire to attend school. The process of learning social communication skills includes learning how to interact appropriately with others, make and maintain healthy friendships, develop an awareness of social norms and cues, coordinate healthy social interactions with others, and effectively communicate feelings, needs, or wants.

The impact of students possessing these skills will benefit teachers and help to achieve school goals. The learning process results in facilitating healthier social interactions between students and teachers, positive effects on student academic performance, and less disruption and behavioral problems in the classroom from students who may struggle with pragmatics.

Furthermore, the benefits to parents include more effective communication with their child; fostering a better relationship; and a sense of peace that their child can socially interact with others both during and after school.

### **Helpful tips:**

- The best way for students to learn good social communication skills is by socializing. Having students participate in partner or group work is a great way to initiate a social situation in the classroom that can be beneficial for each student. Assigning a role for each student in the group can also help students practice staying on task.
- Practice "greeting" the classroom every day and have students collectively greet you back. This can help students adopt the habit of greeting others when they first see them, which is polite and often necessary.
- Encourage and praise expressiveness in the classroom. A fun and easy daily activity involves displaying a picture and telling students to say whatever descriptive word that comes to mind, out-loud and one-by-one. This allows students to brainstorm, take-turns, and learn new words from other students.
- Taking turns - promote taking turns in everyday classroom activities. For example, when students raise their hand to answer a question, choose one person and then tell another that they are to go next. This reinforces the idea of taking-turns and lets students practice letting someone finish speaking before they begin to speak.



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## Introductory Lesson: Social Communication

### What to Know Before You Begin

#### **Definition**

What is Social Communication?

Social communication skills refer to the skills needed to effectively use verbal and non-verbal language and facial expressions to communicate. They are needed in social situations because they allow us to properly and effectively speak with others, use language to share how we feel, and follow social rules or cues.

How are these skills applied?

Social communication skills are applied using active listening, speaking when it is your turn to speak, appropriate articulation of your feelings or needs, showing empathy and understanding for the other person's feelings or needs, and awareness of the other person's facial and body expressions.

#### Fascinating Facts:

- The first written types of communication were drawings on animal skins, wood, and cave walls more than 9,000 years ago!
- Today there are over 6,000 different languages spoken world-wide!
- The brain uses energy to send many small electrical impulses that allow us to communicate!

### Activity

#### **Active Listening & Asking Great Questions**

Have you ever heard someone tell a story and then you immediately tell them about a similar story? That is not active listening, even though it helps you both to relate to each other and share things that you have in common. Instead of sharing your similar story, practice asking questions about your friend's story. Just listen and ask questions.

Pair up in groups of two. Take turns telling a story and asking questions. The first person to speak will tell a story. Maybe it's about the last time you went to a store and purchased



something or about the last time you went on vacation. Tell any kind of story that comes to mind.

The second person will only ask questions about that story. Don't share a similar story, just ask questions. Active listening does not mean that you wait to talk and share your story, it means that you listen and ask, trying to learn as much as you can about the story.

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## Lesson 2: Social Skills

### What to Know Before You Begin

#### Major Social Communication Skills

There are three important areas in social communication: using language, adapting language and following social rules.

**Using Language:** Using language involves the ability to apply language to a variety of different situations, such as:

- Greeting- saying "hello" or "good-bye" when you meet or leave someone.

Example: "Good morning, how are you today?"

- Informing- letting someone know something or telling someone what you are going to do.

Example: "I am going to go ride my bike outside."

- Demanding- telling someone what you want or need.

Example: "Give me a pencil so I can write that down."

- Requesting- asking someone for something.

Example: "Mom, can you make cookies tonight, please?"



**Adapting Language:** Adjusting the way you speak based on who you are talking to or what situation you are in. For example, talking loud on the playground and with a quieter “inside voice” inside the classroom or talking differently to a baby than you would talk to an adult.

**Following Social “Rules”:** These are the rules of talking or storytelling. Making eye contact, staying on topic, and taking turns when speaking are all “unspoken” conversation or social rules we should follow.

**Activity**

**Adaptive Language Role Play**

Students should pair-up in groups of three or four. Assign each group with a simulated or made-up situation that the students can pretend to be in. Some examples of situations are going on a field trip to a museum, going to a friend’s house, or meeting someone for the first time. After assigning each group with a situation, tell the students to take turns talking to each other as they would if they were really in that setting.

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## **Lesson 3: Recognizing Emotions Exercise**

**What to Know Before You Begin**

Recognizing emotions is a skill that can be strengthened and enhanced or can easily be ignored and grow rusty both in childhood and throughout life. Practice makes perfect. During the exercise of recognizing emotions, students are urged to first recognize the emotions of others before engaging in a conversation.

**Activity**

**Miming**

Stand at the front of the classroom and write every emotion you can think of on the board for students to see. Then, make a random facial expression and have students use the words on the board to guess what expression you are making. After they guess, have them all try making the expression themselves as a class. This is a fun and silly way to practice making facial expressions and discuss the feelings that match with those expressions.

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## **Lesson 4: Using Descriptive Language**

Communication skills are key indicators of an individual's lifelong success and are the top skills requested by modern employers. Although elementary students don't need to worry about



securing jobs, these skills are learned and enhanced at these young ages. Bad habits can either be developed or curbed at the elementary grade levels, which can directly impact the trajectory of a student's life.

By practicing the use of descriptive language, students are urged to avoid using one-word answers when communicating with teachers and parents.

### **Activity**

#### **Describe Activities:**

Write an activity or place to go on the board; some examples are the movie theater, the beach, or a birthday party. Have students one-by-one, use descriptive language to describe activities you can do at the place you choose, like getting **delicious** popcorn at the movie theater, building a **monster** sandcastle, or playing an **exciting** game of hide-and-seek at a birthday party.

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### **Quick Quiz:**

1. Which of the following is a part of Social Communication?
  - A.) Adapting language
  - B.) Following social "rules"
  - C.) Using language
  - D.) All of the above
  
2. Why is social communication such an important skill?
  - A.) It helps us ignore each other
  - B.) It helps us communicate with each other better
  - C.) It makes us more confused
  - D.) It isn't an important skill
  
3. You're working in a group and you get assigned a role in the group that you don't like. What should you do?
  - A.) Be a team player and do the best you can at the role, even if it isn't the one you wanted
  - B.) Ask the teacher for a new role because you don't want to perform the role you were assigned.
  - C.) Tell someone to trade with you because the teacher will never know



D.) Don't participate because you don't like your role

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**Teacher Feedback**

Please provide insights on any adjustments made regarding the actual use of the content above. Feel free to share your thoughts, suggestions, constructive criticism. Email your feedback to: [info@mylearningtools.org](mailto:info@mylearningtools.org)

**Module Layout & Design ideas for designer:**

- <https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/play-and-social-skills/social-communication-pragmatics/>
- <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=287&id=2905>
- <https://childmind.org/guide/social-communication-disorder/>