

Workplace Responsibilities

The **BIG** Idea

- What are my responsibilities as an employee?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Work World (5 minutes)
- II. Workplace Skit and Discussion (10 minutes)
- III. Workplace Responsibilities (15 minutes)
- IV. What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know (Responsibilities) (10 minutes)
- V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**
 - Student Handbook page 105, Case Study
 - Student Handbook page 106, What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know (Responsibilities)
 - Student Handbook pages 107–108, First Job
- FACILITATOR RESOURCE PAGES:**
 - Facilitator Resource 1, Workplace Skit
- Chart paper and marker
- Cell phone
- Props for Workplace Skit (See **Facilitator Resource 1**)

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Discover that they have responsibilities in the workplace.
- Discern between correct, and incorrect, ways to act on the job.

OVERVIEW

By the time students reach ninth grade, many will already have had jobs, babysitting, working in family businesses, mowing lawns or refereeing town recreation games. Others will experience the work world soon. Teenagers need to know how to behave in this new arena, and what their responsibilities are. This lesson will give them valuable information about the work world, and offer a safe haven in which to practice handling different workplace situations.

PREPARATION

- List the **BIG IDEA** and the day's activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- Make transparencies of the following pages:
 - **Student Handbook page 105, Case Study**
 - **Student Handbook page 106, What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know (Responsibilities)**
- Select a volunteer in advance to participate in the Workplace Skit in **Activity II**. Prior to class, explain to the volunteer that he/she will be playing the role of the employer, while you will be acting as the employee. During this skit you will be purposely demonstrating incorrect workplace behavior. The student's job is to try to stay calm and follow the script outlined on **Facilitator Resource 1, Workplace Skit**.
- Decide on how you want to group the students for **Activity III, Workplace Responsibilities**.
- If desired, have small prizes on hand to award for each group creating a complete set of rules in **Activity III**.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Students entering the workforce may lack experience in workplace etiquette such as showing up on time, reporting absences, dressing appropriately, and limiting personal phone calls. They may also need coaching on workplace attitudes in order to recognize entry-level jobs as places to learn transferable skills and begin a work history. Finally, they may not be aware of employers' obligations toward them concerning issues like sexual harassment, wages, working

hours, and workmen’s compensation. Teens may need help negotiating complicated employment issues as they work side by side with adults for the first time. (You’ll find more about the rights of teen employees in the next lesson.)

For more information on the legal aspects of teen employment, please visit <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/index.html>, and <http://www.youthrules.dol.gov>.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Activity III, Workplace Responsibilities:

Make sure students know from the outset that the Case Study must be a school-appropriate business. If you feel this is going to be an issue, feel free to supply your students with several ideas from which to choose. (It may also be helpful to set a time limit for choosing a company name and type of business.)

If your students function poorly in groups, you may prefer to do this as a whole-class activity.

For lower-level learners, you can abbreviate the set-up: “You’re a boss at such-and-such a company, and most of your workers are high school kids. Your job is to create a set of rules so that they know what’s expected in the workplace.”

Students who finish early may create a consequence for each rule they’ve created.

If you find this lesson takes less than a full class period, you may wish to present a scenario or two from next week’s lesson. (Use the “Responsibility” scenarios with this lesson.) Read a scenario aloud and have teams brainstorm the best solution.

In **Activity II, Workplace Skit and Discussion**, feel free to improvise the skit as described on **Facilitator Resource 1, Workplace Skit**.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: Work World (5 minutes)

1. [Greet students and ask, by a show of hands, which students have ever had a job. Remind them that babysitting, mowing lawns, or walking a neighbor's dog counts. When hands go up, ask the "workers" what they liked, and didn't like about their jobs. Were there certain things they had to do? Were there other things they couldn't do? How did they know what was, or wasn't, acceptable behavior?]

[When students have answered, use their responses to point out that when you have a job, certain things are required of you, and you must know what they are to succeed. In addition to fulfilling your obligations, you must also behave appropriately and be aware of how your actions will affect the other people in your workplace.]

II. Workplace Skit and Discussion (10 minutes)

1. [Have a student volunteer act out the skit as described in **Facilitator Resource 1, Workplace Skit**. (See **PREPARATION**.) Explain to the class that you will be playing the role of employee, while the student will be playing the role of your boss. Ask the class to notice how you act during this skit and to take note of how your boss reacts.]
2. [After the skit, ask the students what they thought of your behavior. How did your behavior affect your boss? How might it have affected business? Ask students if they would have wanted to work with you.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Because I was performing in a skit, I intentionally pushed my behavior to the limit. But people do things all the time at work that are similar. For example, when I told my boss that filing papers isn't my dream job, I made it obvious that I felt bored. How might a worker do this in real life? (sigh loudly, mutter under their breath, etc.)

And what about talking loudly on a cell phone? What are some things a worker might do that would give the boss the idea that they're not working very hard?" (take too many breaks, fool around, come back from lunch an hour late, etc.)

3. [Ask students to brainstorm other ways people might get into trouble at work, and quickly list these items on chart paper or the board.]

III. Workplace Responsibilities (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** In this next activity, I'd like you to take a look at the workplace from the employer's perspective.
2. [Group students in teams, and refer them to **Student Handbook page 105, Case Study**. Have students follow along as you read aloud. Their task is to come up with two rules for each category, one to correct the problem given as an example, and another to correct a similar problem—same category. Give groups a structure (for example, each person offers a suggestion in turn, in the order in which they're sitting) for accomplishing their work, perhaps having them select a recorder to take notes and a reporter to share their work with the class. Allow students five to 10 minutes to come up with a list of workplace rules. Teams who come up with eight rules (all must be reasonable, easy to understand, and easy to enforce) win a small prize.]
3. [As each team reports its results, other teams should review their own lists for similar items, so that no "rule" is heard more than once.]

IV. What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know (Responsibilities) (10 minutes)

1. [Refer students to **Student Handbook page 106, What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know (Responsibilities)**. Ask them to read the items to identify any important issues they missed when creating their employee rules.

If your students' lists covered many of these points, congratulate them on having such a mature, clear grasp of the workplace. If not, use this opportunity to point out how valuable it is to think about workplace issues before you find yourself in the midst of one.]

2. [Direct students' attention to the questions at the bottom of the page, which require their opinions about workplace responsibilities. Have students complete the questions independently, then share their answers with a partner. Call on several pairs to share answers with the class.]

V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. [Express to students that there's something called "a good work ethic," which means doing your job to the best of your ability, and taking responsibility for your actions.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Usually, if you have a good work ethic, you will succeed in the workplace. And if you don't, you won't. The workplace is serious business, and you are there to do a job. If you give your boss attitude and expect him/her to bend the rules for you, you're less likely to get promotions, raises, and a good recommendation—and you could end up out of a job.

[Prepare them for the possibility that employers are not always angels, either.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Occasionally, there are employers who try to stretch the rules, because they think teenagers won't know when it's OK to say no. But if an employer asks you to do something dangerous, or inappropriate, it's your right to refuse. We'll talk more about an employer's responsibilities to you next week.

[And last, but not least, remind students that their rights and responsibilities may differ from job to job, so it's important to be clear on what the rules are in every new workplace.]

3. [Assign **Student Handbook pages 107–108, First Job**, as homework, to find out about the first work experiences of someone they know.]

Workplace Skit

[Employee is sitting at his/her desk, drinking coffee, eating breakfast and is deeply involved in a personal phone call. The employer enters with a stack of papers.]

Employer (student): Good morning, Chris. It's good to see you today.

Employee (teacher): (Into Phone: Hold on a minute, my boss is here.)

Employer: I'd like you to file these applications alphabetically, using the applicants' last names. [Hand the employee the papers.]

Employee: [Sigh loudly and roll your eyes.] Sure, I'll get to them in a little bit. (Into Phone: OK, where were we?)

Employer: OK, just make sure that you get them filed within an hour. There are a lot of things I need you to do today.

Employee: Sure, no problem. [Goes back to phone conversation and puts feet up on top of desk.] [After an hour the employer comes back to check in on the employee. The employee is still reading from the paper.]

Employer: Chris, how is the filing coming along?

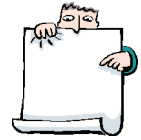
Employee: Well, I started to work on them, but then I got really bored so I decided to take a break. I mean filing papers isn't exactly my dream job.

Employer: Chris, I know that filing can be a little tedious at times, but it helps keep all of our records organized. OK, how many did you get done?

Employee: Um...I don't know about 20, I lost count. Oh, and you wanted me to file them by the person's first name, right?

Employer: [Shakes head.] No, they need to be filed by the applicant's last name.

Case Study



Name of Business: _____

Type of Business: _____

The members of your team are the owners of a small business that has been open for just one year. The rest of your employees are high-school students who work part time and on weekends.

At first, you wanted to be the kind of boss who could easily relate to your employees, who are close to you in age. Now it seems like they're totally taking advantage of you—coming in late, spending too much time on the phone, and behaving unprofessionally.

In the left-hand column, there is a problem that has already been written into the boxes. Write down another problem that could come up relating to the same issue. Then in the right-hand column, create a rule that would solve both of these problems. Once you have finished filling in the chart, create a list of rules that can be handed out to new and current employees to let them know what you expect. Be prepared to explain how each rule will solve a problem you've been having.

PROBLEM	RULE TO SOLVE IT
<p>Work Schedule Example: Employees arrive 15 minutes late.</p> <p>Another scheduling problem: _____ _____</p>	
<p>Job Responsibilities Example: The last employee at work is supposed to mop the floor before they leave. Nobody does this.</p> <p>Another job responsibility problem: _____ _____</p>	
<p>Safety Example: Employees store cardboard boxes next to the furnace. You're afraid there's going to be a fire.</p> <p>Another safety problem: _____ _____</p>	
<p>Respect for Customers & Coworkers Example: Employees talk on their cell phones while waiting on customers.</p> <p>Another respect problem: _____ _____</p>	

What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know (Responsibilities)

Read the list of responsibilities. Then write your answers to the questions below.

Teen workers have the responsibility to:

- Ask questions, and/or request training, about how to perform the job.
- Show up on time, and work assigned hours.
- Perform their assigned jobs.
- Be sober/drug free on the job.
- Call in sick if they're too ill to work.
- Follow employer's safety guidelines, and wear required protective clothing and equipment.
- Read workplace signs, and take an active role in keeping themselves safe.
- Treat coworkers and customers with courtesy and respect.
- Follow company rules and procedures.
- Work together to solve problems, and let employers know when help is needed.

1. Which responsibility above is meant to keep workers safe?

2. Which responsibility would have the biggest impact on customer satisfaction?

3. Which responsibility would contribute the most to making the business run smoothly?

4. How are these responsibilities similar to (or different from) your responsibilities as a student?

5. Which of these would you find hardest to do? Which would be easiest?

FIRST JOB

What does it feel like to get your first job? Interview someone to find out. Use the questions below to help you with your interview.

Name of person interviewed: _____

Relationship to you: _____

1. What was their first job? How old were they when they got the job and how long did they work there?

2. What were some of their responsibilities?

3. What was their favorite thing about the job? Why?

4. What was their least favorite thing about the job? Why?

5. Did they make any mistakes at work, and if so, how did they handle them?

6. What did they learn about being a good employee (worker)?

7. What advice would this person give to someone entering the workforce for the first time?

8. What, if anything, about this interview surprised you?

9. Do you think that the advice you were given about entering the workforce was helpful? Why or why not?
