

Soft Skills for Your Future Job

Lesson Authors

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Lesson Description

Soft skills are critical to success in the workplace. Students will read an article to learn about essential soft skills, then they'll complete a soft skills self-assessment. Students will then evaluate the soft skills needed for specific jobs and compare them with their self-assessment to determine where skills gaps may exist. Finally, students will watch a video about professionalism, reflect on professionalism in specific jobs, and practice professionalism in a real-life situation.

Grade Level

9–12

Concepts

Careers
Soft skills
Workplace expectations

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify soft skills desired in the jobs in which they are interested.
- Compare and contrast the different soft skills needed in various jobs.
- Critically evaluate their current soft skills proficiency.
- Evaluate how their current soft skills compare to the soft skills desired in specific jobs.
- Provide specific examples of situations in which they have demonstrated soft skills proficiency.
- Practice professionalism in a real-life situation.

Time required

75 minutes for entire lesson (individual components can be completed separately as standalone activities)

Materials

Visual 1: "What's the Connection?"

Handout 1: "Soft Skills Self-Assessment" (one copy for each student)

Handout 2: "Evaluating Soft Skills Needed for Your Future Job" (one copy for each student)

Handout 3: "Reflecting on Your Current Soft Skills for Your Future" (one copy for each student)

Handout 4: "Practicing Professionalism" (one copy for each student)

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Procedures

Note: Before completing this lesson, it may be helpful to have each student complete an interest inventory to provide ideas for jobs and career paths that may be of interest to them.

1. Display Visual 1: “What’s the Connection?” Ask students what they think the connection is between all of the words. After some discussion, tell students the connection is they are all soft skills. Explain that in order to get a job and be successful in it, people need both technical skills (knowledge, training, and skills related to the subject matter or industry) and soft skills (interpersonal skills such as those listed on the visual).
2. Tell students they are going to learn more about the soft skills needed in the workplace. Have students read the National Soft Skills Association article [Top 10 Soft Skills for Success](https://www.nationalsoftskills.org/top-10-soft-skills-for-success/) (<https://www.nationalsoftskills.org/top-10-soft-skills-for-success/>).
3. For this component, you will guide students through the self-assessment. Distribute Handout 1: “Soft Skills Self-Assessment.” As a class, address each of the soft skills one at a time so that the students gain a foundational understanding of the soft skill. As each soft skill is discussed, have students take notes and provide examples in the space provided. Ask students to define the soft skill based on what they read in the article. Poll the class for examples of how they currently display that skill in school, at home, or in other outside activities. On the chart, have students evaluate their expertise in performing that soft skill and explain why they rated themselves in that way. Repeat for each soft skill.
4. Debrief the self-assessment with students. Ask for volunteers to share how they rated themselves on one soft skill and why. Tell students they will later use the information from Handout 1 as part of a reflection.
5. Distribute Handout 2: “Evaluating Soft Skills Needed for Your Future Job.” Explain to students they will identify three jobs of interest and learn more about the soft skills required for that job. Tell students that they will complete the matrix using information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [Occupational Outlook Handbook](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/) (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>).
6. After students complete Handout 2, debrief the activity. Display Visual 1 again. Tell students that this list shows the top 10 soft skills identified in the article read earlier. Ask students to share something they learned about soft skills needed in the workplace. Have students share other soft skills they find that are not listed on Visual 1.
7. Distribute Handout 3: “Reflecting on Your Current Soft Skills for Your Future.” Students should complete Handout 3 using the information from the matrices of Handouts 1 and 2.
8. After students complete Handout 3, debrief the activity. Ask students what they learned about how their current soft skills matched what is required in the workplace. Ask students what steps they need to be taking to improve their soft skills for their future jobs and career paths.
9. Show the US Department of Labor [professionalism video](https://youtu.be/7dPWVjQSad4) (<https://youtu.be/7dPWVjQSad4>). Discuss with students that professionalism is a soft skill made up of several other skills. Distribute Handout 4: “Practicing Professionalism.” You may want to have students complete Handout 4 as a take-home activity since it requires reflection and an opportunity to practice professionalism. Upon completing Handout 4, debrief the activity by having students share ways in which they practiced professionalism and what they learned. Optional supplemental activity: a virtual session or guest speaker with industry experience who could provide additional information about professionalism and soft skills in specific jobs.

Visual 1: What's the Connection

Dependability

Problem solving

Motivation

Flexibility

Communication

Teamwork

Commitment

Leadership

Creativity

Time management



Handout 1: Soft Skills Self-Assessment

1. Read the article Top 10 Soft Skills for Success (<http://www.nationalsoftskills.org/top-10-soft-skills-for-success/>).
2. For each soft skill, take notes about the specific skill during the classroom discussion.
3. Look at the list of soft skills in column 1, then put a check mark in the column to the right that best describes your expertise in performing each soft skill.
4. In the last column, describe the reason you rated yourself as you did for each of the soft skills.

Soft Skills	Rate yourself at each soft skill			
	Good	OK	Want to improve	Why do you think you are good, OK, or want to improve in this area?
Dependability <i>Notes:</i>				
Motivation <i>Notes:</i>				
Communication <i>Notes:</i>				
Commitment <i>Notes:</i>				
Creativity <i>Notes:</i>				
Problem solving <i>Notes:</i>				
Flexibility <i>Notes:</i>				
Teamwork <i>Notes:</i>				
Leadership <i>Notes:</i>				
Time management <i>Notes:</i>				



Handout 2: Evaluating Soft Skills Needed for Your Future Job

1. Go to www.bls.gov/ooh. From the Occupation Groups on the left, click on a group, then select one of the occupations.
2. Click on the occupation title to display the Summary page for that occupation.
3. Look for the tab How to Become One, and click on it. Scroll down to Important Qualities and use this information to identify the soft skills for the occupation. Complete the matrix below.
4. Repeat this process for each additional occupation. To return to the home page, click OOH Home on the upper left of the toolbar.

Soft Skills	Occupation Title 1	Occupation Title 2	Occupation Title 3
Soft Skill 1 <i>Skill and description</i>			
Soft Skill 2 <i>Skill and description</i>			
Soft Skill 3 <i>Skill and description</i>			
Soft Skill 4 <i>Skill and description</i>			
Soft Skill 5 <i>Skill and description</i>			

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Handout 3: Reflecting on Your Current Soft Skills for Your Future

Respond to the following questions based on the information gathered in Handouts 1 and 2.

1. Which soft skills are similar among the jobs you reviewed? Why do you think these soft skills are needed in these jobs?

2. How do the soft skills required in the three jobs compare to your self-assessment?

3. Were soft skills listed in the three jobs that were not on the self-assessment? If so, list these soft skills below and conduct a self-assessment of those skills.

Soft Skills	Rate yourself at each soft skill			
<i>Soft Skill from Handout 2 not included in Handout 1</i>	Good	OK	Want to improve	Why do you think you are good, OK, or want to improve in this area?

4. In the article [Top 10 Soft Skills for Success](http://www.nationalsoftskills.org/top-10-soft-skills-for-success/) (<http://www.nationalsoftskills.org/top-10-soft-skills-for-success/>), it states “...no interviewers will ask students if they have a soft skill. Instead, they’ll ask for proof of the skill based on concrete examples.” Imagine you are interviewing for one of the jobs on your list. Give specific examples of how you demonstrated proficiency in each of the listed soft skills for that job. Your response should be two to three paragraphs.

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Handout 4: Practicing Professionalism

1. After watching the professionalism video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dPWVjQSad4>), reflect and respond in two to three paragraphs to the following questions:
 - Why would professionalism be important in the jobs you selected?
 - How might you integrate professionalism into your everyday life?
 - In what ways could you model your behavior to reflect professionalism?
2. Find an opportunity to practice professionalism. This could be an interaction with a classmate, teacher, coach, administrator, or employer. Reflect and respond in one to two paragraphs to the following questions:
 - Describe the interaction and how you demonstrated professionalism.
 - What went well during the interaction?
 - What could be improved on in the future?