

First Impressions First

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Time Frame 75–105 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- How do our communication choices shape the first impressions others form of us?

Summary

In this activity, students consider how their actions impact the first impressions formed by others. Students reflect on their personal strengths and explore different types of communication—written, verbal, and nonverbal. Students practice making strong first impressions and addressing written communication to different contacts, then reflect on their learning to conclude the activity.

Learning Goals

- Analyze actions that impact first impressions.
- Demonstrate clear communication skills.

Attachments

- Activity Slides—First Impressions First.pptx
- Depends on the Situation—First Impressions First - Spanish.docx
- Depends on the Situation—First Impressions First - Spanish.pdf
- Depends on the Situation—First Impressions First.docx
- Depends on the Situation—First Impressions First.pdf
- To Whom—First Impressions First - Spanish.docx
- To Whom—First Impressions First - Spanish.pdf
- To Whom—First Impressions First.docx
- To Whom—First Impressions First.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- To Whom handout (attached; one per pair; print one-sided)
- Depends on the Situation handout (attached; one per student; print two-sided)

5 minutes

Engage

Facilitator's Note: Preparation

Students will discuss different types of communication—verbal, nonverbal, and written—throughout this learning activity. Keep in mind the cultural norms surrounding these expectations. For example, eye contact may be perceived as respectful in one culture, while avoiding eye contact may be perceived as respectful in another culture. Addressing adults as “sir” or “ma’am” could be seen as expected or unnecessary, depending on the audience. Help students understand that these ideas are social norms and are not rigid rules to follow. They must consider who their audience is in order to be most respectful.

Introduce the activity using the attached **Activity Slides**. Share the essential question on **slide 3** and the learning objectives from **slide 4**.

Introduce the Think-Pair-Share strategy. Display **slide 5** and read both prompts on the screen, pausing to allow for student reflection.

- When you meet someone for the first time, what do you notice about them?
- What do you think people first notice about you?

After students have had a chance to think about both questions, have students get into groups of 2–3 to discuss their answers. Depending on your class, either have each group share out one response to the first prompt or have volunteers share their responses with the whole class.

5 minutes

Explore 1

Display **slide 6** and read the prompt on the screen: “Adults often perceive music from their early years as ‘better’ than current music.” Ask the class what they think the word *perceive* means. Transition to **slide 7** to share that *perception* is the interpretation of sensory information from the environment. Ask students what they think sensory information is, or ask if they can think of any examples of a sense that would help them understand a situation.

Sample Student Responses

Use the following as sample responses or as prompts to guide student thinking.

- I experienced [one of the five senses], so I thought _____. For example, “I heard yelling, so I assumed someone was upset.”

If students are struggling to think of examples, ask them the follow questions:

- If you smelled smoke, then what is happening? Something is burning.
- If you heard the doorbell...
- If you saw someone smile....
- If you touched a hot doorknob....
- If you ate something that tasted sweet...

Facilitator's Note: Guiding the Activity

The following activity uses a quote from the 2015 movie *Ant-Man*. The purpose of the activity is for students to read the quote out of context, see the quote in the context of the corresponding scene, then watch a short clip from the film to see an example of the different types of communication they will learn during the Explain phase. If one of your students recognizes the quote, especially after watching the scene, ask that they hold on to their thoughts so as not to spoil the activity.

Show **slide 8** have students silently read the quote on the slide: “He’s so ugly!” Do not read it aloud. Transition to **slide 9** and ask students how those words on the slide make them feel and what they think this comment is in regards to.

Move to **slide 10**, which shows the same quote and a picture of the speaker. Transition to **slide 11** and ask students how they feel about the quote now that they have seen the speaker.

Display **slide 12** and play the clip, *Ant Man Movie - So Ugly*, on the slide. Transition to **slide 13** and ask students how their answers changed throughout the process of reading the words, seeing the speaker, and then watching the scene.

Show **slide 14** and ask the following questions on the slide, pausing after each question to allow discussion.

- Did everyone have the same perception?
- If your perception changed, when did it shift?
- What might influence someone’s perception?

After students have had a chance to discuss each question, ask the class: “Why should we consider how our actions are being perceived?” Allow time for students to reflect on the question, and then ask for volunteers to share why others’ perceptions of our actions matter.

15 minutes

Explain

Show **slide 15** and explain to students that a *first impression* is an early opinion someone makes during an initial interaction. Invite students to share examples of first impressions.

Facilitator's Note: Guiding Learning

As you facilitate this discussion, help students better understand first impressions by guiding them to see that first impressions are not only about other people, but also about all kinds of things. Consider asking the following questions:

- Have you ever been somewhere that you have strong feelings about? Is this somewhere you would like to visit again or a place you would never want to return to?
- Have you ever tried something new that you have a strong feeling about? Is there something that you will never eat again or a game that you fell in love with?

Display **slide 16** and share with students that there are different ways in which we communicate: verbally, nonverbally, and written. Ask students for examples of each type of communication from their daily life.

Show **slide 17** and share a formal description and additional examples of *nonverbal communication*. Have students consider how information is communicated by asking the question, "What are you communicating without using words?" If students struggle with this question, consider asking the following prompts:

- What do you think if someone is covered in mud?
- What do you think if someone is dressed in formal attire?

Transition through **slides 18–20** to provide different examples of attire and what each example communicates. Help students understand that different situations require different clothing choices. At the end of each slide, consider asking students where the people on the slide might be going or what other conclusions could be drawn based on their attire.

Facilitator's Note: Guiding the Activity

The term “smart casual” was chosen over the term “professional” due to the age of the audience of this activity. *Smart casual* falls between *casual* and *business casual* on the spectrum from *casual* to *business casual* to *business professional* regarding attire.

This lesson was also designed to be mindful of students from different backgrounds. Students do not need to spend money to elevate their casual clothing. Instead, they can choose the cleanest, least-wrinkled pieces of clothing to focus attention on the person rather than the outfit.

Students are likely to have strong feelings about societal expectations of casual versus non-casual attire. Guide students to understand that “appropriate” attire is similar to “appropriate” speech; it is a cultural norm and not something determined by a set group of people, which means it will likely change over time.

It may be worth stressing to students that there is a difference between stuffy and sloppy. Advise students that if they choose to wear makeup or accessories, such as jewelry, a tie, or a handbag, they should keep this minimal so they are not distracting.

Remember that the suggestions on the slides are not meant to make students feel they must lose their identity, but are instead meant to help them avoid being rejected before they are able to speak. These slides are intended to help students be intentional with their nonverbal communication.

Show **slide 21** and share the definitions of *verbal* and *written* communication with examples. Encourage students to consider the prompt, “What are your words implying?” throughout the next activities.

Display **slide 22** and draw students’ attention to the email on the slide. Ask students to identify any familiar elements of the email, if they notice any. Share with students that this example will be further dissected in the following slides. Transition through **slides 23–26** and further elaborate on the parts of an email including the recipient’s email address, the subject line, the greeting, the body of the email (including the introduction and call to action), the closing, and the email signature.

10 minutes

Explore 2

Show **slide 27** and introduce the idea that sometimes students will email someone they know and sometimes they will email someone they have never met. Ask if (and how) this difference in recipient should influence how they write their email and facilitate a brief discussion.

Display **slide 28** and have students find a partner or assign partners. Give each pair one copy of the attached **To Whom** handout. Tell students that the handout includes two emails, one written as if they know the person and the other written as if they have never met the person. Have them use choices from the answer bank to fill in the blanks.

After pairs complete the handout, use **slides 29–32** to guide a class discussion. Invite students to share out what they wrote in the blanks along with their reasoning. Remember that there are multiple correct responses and not all options from the answer bank will be used. If students struggle with which phrases best fit each email, encourage them to consider which phrases sound more formal and which email would require that level of formality.

30 minutes

Extend

Display **slide 33** and encourage students by telling them that communication skills take time to develop, and they develop through practice. Let students know that their goal is to become an effective communicator who is able to clearly communicate a message, reach a mutual understanding, and acquire the desired response.

Move to **slide 34** and give each student one copy of the attached **Depends on the Situation** handout. Have students work individually or in pairs to complete this activity. Explain to students that they should pick two situations from the next slide—one situation per side of the handout—and use those situations to practice their communication skills.

On the front of the handout, have students write their selected situation number in the blank. Have them then describe both the verbal and nonverbal communication they would use in that situation. Students should describe the nonverbal communication in the space at the top of the handout and describe the verbal communication between themselves and the other person using the speech bubbles.

On the back of the handout, have students write a different selected situation number and use that situation to practice their written communication skills in the form of an email.

Transition to **slide 35** and give students approximately 15–25 minutes to complete the handout, depending on your students' level of comfort with the tasks.

Display **slide 36** and encourage students to consider which situation they found most challenging. Facilitate a brief discussion about their selections.

Optional Additional Activity

Consider having students continue to practice their communication skills by reaching out to their teachers, other school staff, or community members.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 37** and introduce the Mirror, Microscope, Binocular strategy. Have students take out a piece of paper and respond to the reflection questions on the slide:

- **Mirror:** What do I currently do to make a good first impression?
- **Microscope:** What skill can I practice to improve others' first impressions of me?
- **Binoculars:** How can I apply what I learned to future situations?

Facilitator's Note: Guiding the Activity

Guide students to use the mirror question to look at their strengths and the microscope question to identify areas for improvement. To help students respond to the binoculars question, guide them to consider situations from the handouts during this learning experience including: asking a teacher for help, finding a professional to job shadow or be a guest speaker at their school, asking a counselor or representative from a postsecondary institution about taking certain classes, etc.

Collect student responses and use them to assess learning.

Research Rationale

Research rationale for this resource is provided in the literature review The Role of After-School Digital Media Clubs in Closing Participation Gaps and Expanding Social Networks.

Resources

- Deo. (2016, May 13). *Ant Man movie - So ugly, I loved* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nStEvyBDNgo
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Mirror, microscope, binoculars. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/3020
- K20 Center. (n.d.). *The role of after-school digital media clubs in closing participation gaps and expanding social networks*. Literature Review. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/literature-review/4757
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-pair-share. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139