

HOW TO TEACH SOFT SKILLS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Soft skills can be defined as combination of people, social, communication skills, character traits, and career attributes that allow an individual navigate their work environment and interact with coworkers appropriately. Soft skills can include greeting coworkers, clocking in/out, starting or ending a conversation, making appropriate comments, time management, teamwork, problem solving, and much more! It is important to teach soft skills to your students so they are able to excel in the work environment. Below are a few ways to teach soft skills within your daily classroom routine.

1. Have students practice clocking in and out each day for class.

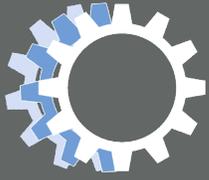
- Create a sign in sheet where students sign their names and put the time they arrive. When students leave the classroom, practice signing out with the time as well.
- Teach students to put the exact time they arrive and leave instead of estimating the time.
- The timesheet can be electronic or on paper. If using an electronic version, it can be as simple as creating an excel document where the students practice signing in/out each day.

2. Teach students to greet others appropriately.

- Embed time to greet peers and other adults daily in your classroom.
- Have students greet at least three people each morning. Then have students fill out a self-evaluation form to determine if they made eye contact, asked how the other person was doing, and addressed the individual by name.
- When class is over, have the students practice telling at least two people goodbye.

3. Teach when it is appropriate to have a conversation with a coworker.

- Provide students with examples and nonexamples of when it is appropriate to have a conversation with a coworker
 - Examples: when you arrive at work, during lunch breaks, or in-between meetings, it is appropriate to have a brief conversation with coworkers and to ask how they are doing.
 - Conversations should be brief (no longer than 5 minutes) and limit personal questions.
 - Nonexamples: Limit conversations during a meeting, if the coworker is in the middle of a task, or if they are conversing with a supervisor.
- Role play different scenarios so students can practice starting and ending a conversation.
 - Students can role play conversations that occur when arriving to work, when a coworker is in a conversation, or during a meeting.



Transition

T E N N E S S E E

4. Teach students how to manage their time appropriately.

- Have students create a list of what they need to do each day.
- Practice checking off completed tasks.
- Use a visual timer or schedule to help students know when they should move on to the next task.
- Teach students when it is appropriate to take breaks. For example, after working for 30 minutes, it could be appropriate to take a short 2-minute break.

5. Brainstorm how to solve problems in the work environment.

- Create a list of potential problems the student could encounter at work and then brainstorm potential solutions.
- Go over the steps of problem-solving together and practice within the classroom.
 1. Students should ask themselves the following questions: Is the problem something I can fix on my own? If so, take the steps needed to solve the problem.
 2. Can I ask a coworker for help? Is the problem something a coworker could help me with? Only ask a coworker if I have tried to fix the problem by myself first.
 3. Do I need to let my supervisor know about the problem? If my coworker and I are not able to solve the problem, I might need to let a supervisor know.
- For more information on problem solving, visit Lesson 5 in the [Pathways to Self-Determination Course](#).