


TEACHING GUIDE


SOFT SKILLS



THE KEY TO SUCCESS!

Career-Focused Activities That Boost ELA & Life Skills

DEAR TEACHER,

It's never too early to start your students thinking about their future and the life skills they'll need for success. Developed with Scholastic and the U.S. Department of Labor, these materials will help your middle school students explore future careers and introduce them to hands-on youth apprenticeship opportunities they can plan to take advantage of in high school. Inside you'll find:

- ✓ Standards-supporting lessons and activity sheets
- ✓ Engaging classroom poster
- ✓ *Jobs of the Future* student magazine

Get more lessons at [scholastic.com/apprenticeship](https://www.scholastic.com/apprenticeship).



Developed with the U.S. Department of Labor.

Pursuant to the National Apprenticeship Act, the Department of Labor works to expand opportunities related to apprenticeship programs.

UNDERSTANDING SOFT SKILLS

Introduce students to life skills they'll need for on-the-job success.

Objective

Students will discuss job skills, analyze informational text, and define career-related vocabulary, citing evidence from the text to support their ideas.

CCSS Standards, Grades 6–8

- WHST.9—draw evidence from informational texts
- RI.4—determine the meaning of words and phrases as used in a text
- SL.1.A—come to discussions prepared

Time

90 minutes (over two class periods)

Materials

- *Jobs of the Future* student magazine
- Learning on the Job activity sheet
- Match the Skills to the Job activity sheet



Part 1 of 2

1 Hook students to think about a job kids their age might do, like walking a neighbor's dog.

Ask: *What skills do you need to do this job well?* (Answers could include being on time, cleaning up after the dog, being gentle, etc.) Now have them take their best guess at what the terms **hard skills** and **soft skills** might mean. Explain that hard skills are knowledge-based and describe someone's technical ability to do tasks related to a specific job. Soft skills are based on behavior and describe how someone completes tasks and how they work with others.

2 Give examples of soft skills (e.g., problem-solving, patience, clear communication), then create a comprehensive list as a class. Point out that while people can learn hard skills through specific training or on the job, they can learn soft skills at any time, both in and out of school and through a youth apprenticeship.

3 Ask the class to describe skills they believe a doctor needs. Label each as a hard skill or soft skill in two columns. Then have students pair up to brainstorm how a doctor's ability to do their job might be affected without soft skills. Poll the class: *Would they want to see this doctor if they didn't like their interactions? Why?*

4 Guide students to discuss why soft skills are important in any job. Emphasize that soft skills impact how well a person does their job, how well they work in a team, and how consistently they excel at their tasks.

5 Distribute the student magazine and have students read the feature article and career profiles, and take the quiz. Direct them to pay attention to keywords as they read and use context clues to understand the meaning. Make sure they think about the main ideas and supporting details.

6 Hand out the Learning on the Job activity sheet. Have students research the definitions of keywords and use textual information to answer questions.

Part 2 of 2

1 Explain that employers seeking to hire young people for an apprenticeship (see student magazine) or a job look for candidates with strong soft skills, as students may have limited work experience or hard skills. Share that it can be difficult to develop soft skills without a real situation to respond to, so finding a work opportunity like an apprenticeship is a great way to build soft skills through experience.

2 Challenge students to identify soft skills they have already started to develop (e.g., being on time and prepared for school, helping siblings resolve conflicts, working productively in project groups, navigating personal setbacks, etc.).

3 Emphasize the importance of soft skills in school and the workplace. Read these two scenarios aloud: *You didn't do well on a test and need to ask your teacher for help. You want to join an after-school club, but you don't know anyone in it.* Ask students to write down the action they would take in each scenario, identify the soft skills each action requires, and describe what outcome each soft skill would help them achieve.

4 Distribute the Match the Skills to the Job activity sheet. Have students discuss their answers in groups. (Possible answers: **1.** detail-oriented, communication, proactive; **2.** time management, collaboration, communication; **3.** active listening, communication, problem-solving; **4.** time management, proactive, adaptability, problem-solving.)

5 Wrap up by prompting students to share at least one occupation they're interested in. Ask: *What types of hard and soft skills would set you up for success?*

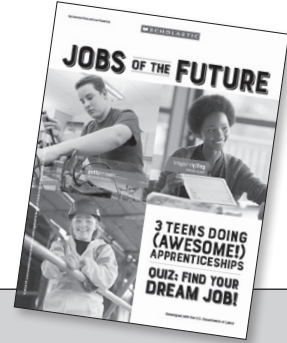
Extension

Have students write a persuasive essay highlighting three soft skills they believe are essential to *any* job.

Name _____

LEARNING ON THE JOB

Read the article and profiles in the *Jobs of the Future* magazine. Then use information from the text to answer these questions.



Keyword	How would you define this term in your own words?
apprenticeship	
trade	
profession	
hard skills	
soft skills	

1 What is the purpose of a youth apprenticeship?

2 Why is it helpful to learn about possible career pathways before starting high school?

3 What advantages does a youth apprenticeship give students when applying for a job?





THINK IT THROUGH Why is it important to develop both hard skills and soft skills?

Name _____

MATCH THE SKILLS TO THE JOB



Study the soft skills in the word bank, then read each job scenario and decide which skills best apply to each scenario and why. Be prepared to explain your thinking to your classmates!

SOFT SKILLS	JOB SCENARIO 1: Hotel Event Planner 
time management	<p>You're an apprentice at a hotel and your boss has put you in charge of logistics for a corporate retreat, including checking in guests, setting up meeting rooms, and making sure lunch arrives on time. You need to be super organized—and ready to interact with people all day long!</p>
active listening	<p>JOB SCENARIO 2: Social Media Manager </p>
detail-oriented	<p>At the last minute, your supervisor has decided to change the media focus for an upcoming product launch. She gives you and your team 48 hours to design and deliver a detailed presentation that lays out a new strategy for how to promote the product online. And...go!</p>
problem-solving	<p>JOB SCENARIO 3: Financial Services Rep </p>
effective communication	<p>Your manager has put you in charge of handling all customer questions and concerns (over the phone and in-person) about a new service that many are having issues with. You are expected to resolve as many problems as you can, then report which complaints need further attention.</p>
adaptability/patience	<p>JOB SCENARIO 4: Cybersecurity Analyst </p>
collaboration	<p>There's been a major security breach in a corporate network that your company serves. Your boss is unreachable, and the situation is changing by the minute. Your main goals are to target and fix the major glitches as quickly as possible and keep the client calm and informed.</p>
creativity	
proactive/self-starter	

PART 2

On a separate piece of paper, write a description of what the difference would be if someone with strong soft skills were in each scenario versus someone with weak soft skills. Next, think about your own soft-skill strengths and what you need to improve on. Write about how an apprenticeship could help you develop better soft skills, and how those skills could help you in your future career.