



## Lesson Guide

Climbers learn about professional communication and how to navigate workplace interactions. By exploring workplace culture, communication styles, and code-switching, they develop self-awareness and strategies to adapt their communication in different professional settings. By the end of the lesson, Climbers will create a Personal Communication Plan that identifies their strengths, areas for growth, and concrete steps to improve their professional communication skills.

<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<p><b>Identify</b> key elements of professional communication and describe their impact in the workplace.</p> <p><b>Understand</b> workplace culture and code-switching to adapt communication styles for different professional settings.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> a personal communication plan that outlines strengths, areas for growth, and actionable steps for improvement.</p>
<b>WIOA Program Elements</b>	<p><b>E5. Education Offered Concurrently with Workforce Preparation.</b> Integrates technical skills training with professional communication and presentation skills.</p>
<b>Key Concepts</b>	<p><b>Professional Communication:</b> Clear, respectful workplace communication that builds relationships and supports collaboration.</p> <p><b>Workplace Culture:</b> The values, behaviors, and norms that shape communication and interactions at work.</p> <p><b>Code-Switching:</b> Adjusting your language and tone to fit different professional situations.</p>
<b>Materials</b>	<p>Coach Deck: <a href="#">Professional Communication Lesson Deck</a></p> <p>Internet-ready devices with Hats &amp; Ladders access</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> <a href="#">My Communication Plan</a></p> <p><b>Rubric:</b> <a href="#">My Communication Plan</a></p>

## Coach Prep

1. Review lesson instructions and activity materials, including the **Coach Deck**, an optional resource to guide Climbers through the lesson, and digital Career Climb.
2. Arrange a computer lab or laptop cart, or instruct your group to bring their own devices with internet connectivity.
3. *Optional:* From the Coach platform, assign the **Professional Communication** Career Climb to your group. This will allow you to track their progress from your dashboard.

## Warm-Up

1. Introduce Professional Communication and describe how professional communication helps build relationships, earn respect, and create a positive work environment.
2. Encourage Climbers to think about the differences between personal and professional communication and the role of context in shaping communication styles. Suggested prompts:
  - *Why do you think it's important to adjust how we communicate at work?*
  - *How does professional communication affect relationships with coworkers and supervisors?*
  - *Have you ever been in a situation where someone's communication felt too informal or unprofessional? How did it impact the interaction?*
3. Have a few Climbers share their thoughts.
4. Frame that developing strong professional communication skills requires self-awareness, awareness of **workplace culture**, the ability to handle professional interactions, and the skill of **code-switching**—adjusting your communication style based on the situation and who you're interacting with. Optional prompt:
  - *What are some unspoken rules or expectations you've noticed in different workplaces, and how do they impact communication?*
5. Briefly outline what will be covered in the lesson, including:
  - **How to Communicate Professionally**
  - **Workplace Culture**
  - **Developing a Communication Plan**

## Guide a Career Climb

1. Briefly describe the role of self-awareness in strengthening professional communication skills. Explain how it helps Climbers recognize their communication strengths, challenges, and tendencies, allowing them to adapt to different situations, improve clarity and confidence, enhance emotional intelligence, and strengthen workplace relationships.  
Optional Prompt:
  - *How do you think your communication style affects the way others perceive you at work? Can you think of a time when adjusting your communication improved an interaction?*
2. Provide framing about key strategies to communicate professionally, including being clear and concise, active listening, and maintaining a respectful tone of voice.
3. Direct Climbers to the Hats & Ladders platform to complete the **Professional Communication Career Climb**, which consists of four Ladders:
  - **Communicating at Work** (6 Mins)
  - **Practice Communicating Professionally** (11 Mins)
  - **What is Workplace Culture?** (7 Mins)
  - **Code Switching 101** (5 Mins)
4. Climbers can complete the entire Career Climb **at once**, or they can **pause** to share out takeaways and questions along the way.
5. Climbers can then apply what they learned about workplace culture and professional communication to inform their Communication Plan.

## Activity: My Communication Plan

1. Have Climbers independently read through the instructions on the [activity handout](#).
2. Climbers complete the activity.
3. Facilitate a brief **pair-and-share reflection**. Suggested prompts:
  - *Which communication strength do you think benefits you the most in a professional setting, and why?*
  - *What challenges in communication have you faced, and how did they impact your interactions?*
  - *Looking at your action plan, which step do you think will be the hardest to follow through on? How can you stay accountable?*
4. Have a few Climbers share their reflections.

## Wrap-Up

1. Summarize how continuing to reflect and work on their Communication Plans will enable them to strengthen their Professional Communication skills. Summarize the benefits and value of strong self-awareness and professional communication skills.
2. Review key lesson concepts, including:
  - **Professional Communication:** Clear, respectful workplace communication that builds relationships and supports collaboration.
  - **Workplace Culture:** The values, behaviors, and norms that shape communication and interactions at work.
  - **Code-Switching:** Adjusting your language and tone to fit different professional situations.

## Assessment

- To evaluate the **Climbers' understanding** of the lesson, use the provided **rubric** to score activity submissions on a scale of 1 to 4 for each criterion.

## Modifications

- If you do not have access to devices, have Climbers complete the digital Career Climb at home.

## Activity: My Communication Plan

In any job, communication is key. This activity will help you create a plan to assess and improve your professional communication skills. As you develop your communication plan, think about situations where you've communicated successfully and where you've faced challenges. The more specific you are, the more useful your plan will be.

### Step 1: Identify Strengths

List two areas where you feel confident in communication (e.g., "I'm a good listener" or "I express ideas clearly").

*My strengths are:*

1)	2)
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### Step 2: Identify Areas for Growth

List two areas where you struggle (e.g., "I get nervous speaking in front of groups" or "I forget to proofread emails").

*I struggle with:*

1)	2)
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### Step 3: Set Goals for Improvement

For each **area of growth above**, write down a specific, achievable goal (e.g., "Practice public speaking once a week").

*I can improve by:*


1)	2)
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 **Step 4: Create an Action Plan**

Write down two specific steps you will take to improve these areas (e.g., "Join a public speaking club" or "Ask a friend to proofread my emails").

*In the near future, I will:*

1)	2)
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 **Remember:** This communication plan will help you focus on improving an aspect of your professional communication skills, so that over time you will improve your ability to:

- **Adapt to Different Situations:** Understanding how tone, body language, and word choice impact interactions helps in adjusting communication styles based on the audience and context.
- **Improve Clarity and Confidence:** Being aware of how you express yourself ensures messages are clear, concise, and professional.
- **Enhance Emotional Intelligence:** Recognizing personal triggers and emotions enables better control over reactions, leading to more thoughtful and composed responses.
- **Strengthen Workplace Relationships:** Awareness of how one's communication affects others fosters respect, trust, and collaboration.

## Rubric: My Communication Plan

Criteria	1: Needs Improvement	2: Developing	3: Proficient	4: Exemplary
<b>Identifying Strengths</b>	Fails to identify communication strengths or lists vague or unclear strengths.	Lists one strength or provides general strengths with limited detail.	Lists two clear strengths, but with minimal explanation.	Lists two clear and specific strengths, with strong reflection.
<b>Identifying Areas for Growth</b>	Fails to identify communication struggles or lists vague challenges.	Lists one area for growth or provides general struggles with limited detail.	Lists two areas for growth with minimal explanation.	Lists two clear and specific areas for growth, with insightful reflection.
<b>Setting Goals</b>	Does not set clear goals or goals are unrealistic or vague.	Sets one goal or vague goals that lack specificity.	Sets two goals that are clear but may lack detail.	Sets two specific, achievable, and relevant goals, demonstrating strong planning.
<b>Action Plan</b>	No specific steps provided for improving communication areas.	Provides one or vague steps with limited explanation.	Provides two steps but with minimal clarity or details.	Strong closing; summarizes enthusiasm; provides two specific, actionable steps with detailed plans for improvement.