

## Get Hired: Strong Soft Skills

### Overview

Students will review soft skills that are in demand by employers and rate their own soft skills. They will use personal stories in a job-interview workshop to communicate these skills to a potential employer.

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- ▶ Identify soft skills that are in demand by employers.
- ▶ Demonstrate personal soft skills in a mock interview.

### Preparation

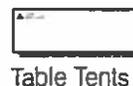
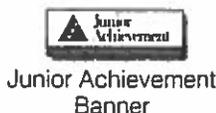
- Review the session and list of materials. Discuss with the teacher how best to organize the students into groups and arrange the room for the activity.
- Post the Career Success Poster in a visible location in the classroom.
- With the teacher's help, formulate a yes or no interview question and an appropriately brief but telling response to highlight how job seekers should offer information beyond a one-word answer. Decide who will ask and who will answer the question during the program's introduction to the students.
- Review the Key Terms as they are mentioned in the session text and margin notes. If possible, post the terms in a visible place in the classroom.
- Consider the soft skills described in the introduction and the interview questions, and prepare personal examples that illustrate the skills and their importance.
- Review this session's Extended Learning Opportunity on Page 34. Discuss implementation options with the teacher.

### Recommended Time

This session typically takes 45 minutes to complete. Ask the teacher to help you keep track of the time.

### Materials

- ▶ 1 Junior Achievement Banner
- ▶ 32 Table Tents
- ▶ 1 Career Success Poster
- ▶ 32 Career Success Toolboxes
- ▶ 32 Soft Skills Bookmarks
- ▶ 32 Soft Skills Self-Assessments
- ▶ 32 Pens or Pencils (not included)



### Concepts

- ▶ Career preparation
- ▶ Employer expectations
- ▶ Job interviews
- ▶ Job retention
- ▶ Soft skills
- ▶ Technical skills

### Skills

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Formulate answers from personal experiences
- ▶ Self-assessment
- ▶ Work cooperatively

# Presentation

## Introduction

Greet the students. Distribute the Career Success Toolboxes, including the Table Tents.

If you asked the students at the end of the previous session to dress professionally for this session, take note of any students who complied. Tell them they will be practicing interviews later in the session and you appreciate that they came prepared.

Refer students to the Career Success Poster. Explain that in the first three sessions, students learned about the 4Cs—a set of skills that employers want to see in new employees but often don't. In this session, they will learn about other skills that are needed to be successful in any job. Then students will learn how to demonstrate these skills in a job interview.

Remind the students that the skills and habits they develop now will become the tools they use in the workplace. Then review the following talking points and define each of the Key Terms as you review that information.

### Talking Points

- Employers hire people because they need certain tasks performed, and they have very specific expectations for their employees. For example, they might need workers to design, make, or improve products. These are examples of **technical skills**.
- While employees are often hired based on their strong technical skills, they also will have to demonstrate strong **soft skills** to succeed. Define soft skills.
- Soft skills include leadership, self-direction, a strong **work ethic**, a positive attitude, time management, and accepting **constructive feedback**. Companies also look for employees with an **entrepreneurial spirit**.
- It may surprise you, but these soft skills are essential for success at work. Three out of four employees who are fired are let go because of a problem with their soft skills, not their technical skills.
- Try to recall a time when you were on a team with someone who had good technical skills but poor personal skills. It can be frustrating for the whole team.
- The key to strong soft skills at work is practicing them now. The way you conduct yourself and the small choices you make each day create habits. Good or bad, these habits form the behavior you take to the workplace.

**Introduction  
Time**  
20 minutes

### Key Terms

#### **Constructive feedback**

A suggestion that is intended to help or improve.

#### **Entrepreneurial spirit**

Viewing business problems as opportunities for innovation.

#### **Soft skills**

Personal attributes and behaviors not tied to a specific job.

#### **Technical skills**

The abilities and knowledge used in a specific profession.

#### **Work ethic**

A set of values based on hard work and doing the right thing.

Offer a personal example of a person you have encountered who struggled with some of the soft skills needed in the workplace.

Note an example of someone you know who struggled at work because of a soft skills issue:

Ask the students to think about how these same soft skills apply to school.

Students' grades, for example, are based on their technical skills and their knowledge of a specific subject. But good grades are only part of the high school experience. If you are frequently late, inflexible, negative, or unable to accept constructive feedback, school may be frustrating—for you and for those around you.

Distribute a Soft Skills Self-Assessment to the students. Have them write their name in the space provided.

- ▶ Have them complete the sheet by ranking themselves on each item and marking whether they are good at that skill, need more practice, or are unfamiliar with it and need to learn more.
- ▶ Ask them to think of an example of when they demonstrated that soft skill and record it in the last column on the chart.

Allow students 5–7 minutes to complete their self-assessment. Announce when 1 minute remains in the activity.

Explain to the students that to get a job, it is not enough just to have these soft skills; they also need to demonstrate them to a potential employer in an interview.

- ▶ Interviews can be in person, by phone, or in the form of written questions and answers.
- ▶ The interview can be for a job, a scholarship, a club, or an award.
- ▶ Often, a yes or no answer isn't enough. It takes an example to completely answer the question.

Demonstrate with the teacher the difference in effectiveness between answering a question about a soft skill with a yes or no answer and giving an answer that includes a brief example.

Tell the students they will have an opportunity today to practice answering interview questions by sharing personal stories that demonstrate their soft skills.

### Presenting Tip

If students' reading levels or class time is a concern, consider reading each numbered item on the self-assessment aloud to the class and have students rank themselves on their sheets.

## Activity

### Activity-at-a-Glance

Students rotate through roles in a small group and practice answering interview questions using personal stories that illustrate soft skills. They also coach other interviewees.

Distribute a Soft Skills Bookmark to each student.

Tell students that an interview can be a nerve-racking experience, but one way to be successful is to practice. Below is a tool the students can use to practice answering interview questions.

Ask students to turn the bookmark to the side titled "Demonstrate Soft Skills in Interviews." Have student volunteers read the three steps.

### Demonstrate Soft Skills in Interviews

- ✓ Repeat the interview question to yourself and make sure you know what is being asked.
- ✓ Pause to formulate your answer.
- ✓ Include a brief example in your response that demonstrates you have the soft skill, even if you are asked a yes or no question. The example should be:
  - ▶ Brief but with details
  - ▶ Applicable to the job
  - ▶ Recent
  - ▶ True
  - ▶ Believable
  - ▶ Clear and answers the question

#### Presenting Tip

Some students might find the mock interview questions easier to answer if they know what job they are seeking. If this issue arises, ask the students to choose a job position they would want and pretend the interview is for that job, because almost all jobs require soft skills to be successful.

### Interview Workshop

1. Organize the students into groups of three or four. Arrange seating so that each group's members can face one another.
2. Tell the students they will participate in an interview workshop in which they will take turns practicing interview skills and coaching one another.
3. Once again, thank any student who dressed professionally today and point out how important attire is in an interview situation.
4. Each group should assign roles:
  - ▶ One interviewer, asking a question from the bookmark.
  - ▶ One interviewee, answering the question, using examples from his or her Soft Skills Self-Assessment, if needed.
  - ▶ One or two coaches observing the interview, preparing feedback for the interviewee.
5. Ask one group to participate in a sample exchange to demonstrate the process for the whole class:
  - ▶ The interviewer and interviewee should stand, shake hands, practice introducing themselves, and then be seated.

- ▶ The interviewer chooses one of the questions from the bottom half of the bookmark and asks the interviewee to answer it.
  - ▶ The interviewee follows the three steps listed on the bookmark to answer while the coaches observe.
  - ▶ After the answer, the coaches refer to the materials on the back of the Soft Skills Self-Assessment to give specific constructive feedback on the handshake, introduction, and answer.
6. Everyone in the groups then rotates roles and repeats the process until 5 minutes remain in class.

Below is a copy of the sample interview questions from the bookmark.

### Sample Interview Questions

- A. Do you have a strong **work ethic** when you're not being directly supervised?
- B. Are you able to provide **leadership** and influence others when it is needed?
- C. Are you able to **manage your time** so that you accomplish your tasks on time?
- D. How do you respond to **constructive feedback**?
- E. Can you continue to work well in **high-pressure or stressful** situations?

Ask the students to pick one of the soft skills they learned today and consider how they can improve that skill for the future. Ask them to practice their interview questions with family and friends before a real interview.

## Summary and Review

Remind students that soft skills are important to keep a job and that acquiring those skills begins with developing good habits in their daily choices.

Also emphasize that before a job interview, it is important to prepare personal stories that highlight soft skills.

### Career Success Toolbox

Distribute the Career Success Toolbox to the students.

- ▶ Ask students to put their bookmarks and self-assessments in their toolboxes.
- ▶ Ask the students to refer to the section on the outside of the toolbox designated with a 4.
- ▶ Ask the students to fill in the blanks with the three steps for answering an interview question. (Answer: Repeat, Pause, Include a brief example)
- ▶ Suggest that the students keep a record of personal accomplishments that demonstrates their various soft skills. They should review those accomplishments prior to an interview. Recommend students keep this record in their toolboxes.

Thank the students for their efforts and participation. Tell them that next week, they will explore their own work priorities.

**Summary and Review Time**  
5 minutes

### Presenting Tip

If you presented the JA Success Park mobile app from the Extended Learning Opportunity in the last session, ask students if they have had the opportunity to use it.

### Demonstrate Soft Skills in Interviews

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### Sample Interview Questions

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HS1314 Soft Skills Bookmark, Session 4

# SOFT SKILLS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Read each statement below about your soft skills. Mark the column that best represents you.

	This soft skill is a strength of mine. I already do this pretty well.	This soft skill is a weakness of mine. I need to work on it.	I need to learn more about this soft skill. I'm not sure if I'm good at it or not.	Record examples of when you demonstrated this skill or possible ways to strengthen it.*
1. I have a strong work ethic, even when no one is looking over my shoulder to be sure I'm doing the right thing.				
2. I am good at influencing others or being a leader in a group when it is needed.				
3. When someone points out a weakness of mine, I use the information to improve myself without being negative to that person.				
4. When facing a challenge, if I have done everything I can do and still don't have a solution, I find the person who can help me and ask for help.				
5. When facing change, I can be flexible.				
6. I prioritize and plan my tasks so that I meet deadlines.				
7. I am organized.				
8. When under pressure, I am able to stay calm and focused on the task at hand.				
9. I generally have a positive attitude. I am pleasant to be around.				
10. Regardless of how my own day is going, I remain polite to those around me, using "please," "thank you," and "I apologize" as necessary.				

\* Examples can come from your daily routine; they don't have to be from a single, isolated story.

11. List one of the soft skills you would like to learn more about and strengthen before interviewing for a job. How do you plan to learn more about this soft skill? How do you plan to strengthen this soft skill?

12. On Your Own: Consider asking a close friend or family member to rank you on the same soft skills covered in the questions above. Compare their ranking to yours and see if it changes which soft skills you would like to learn more about and which ones you would like to improve.

## Job Interviews Dos and Don'ts

### Do

1. Get a good night's sleep.
2. Take a shower.
3. Dress up. Look like a business expert.
4. Check your appearance in a mirror.
5. Mute cell phones and all other digital devices.
6. Be able to show that you know about the company.
7. Remember that first impressions matter.
8. Have a positive attitude.
9. Offer a firm handshake.
10. Get to the point. Express thoughts clearly and simply.
11. Make sure you answer the question you were asked. Don't ramble on.
12. Make eye contact.
13. Smile.
14. Stand tall. Sit straight.
15. Be adaptable. (No job is a perfect fit.)
16. Bring a resume with contact information and strong references.
17. Bring a portfolio with work samples if you have some experience to show off.
18. Follow up with a thank-you note or email.

### Don't

1. Be late.
2. Bring a friend.
3. Chew gum.
4. Wear sunglasses or headgear, such as a hat or bandana.
5. Be sarcastic or disrespectful.
6. Mumble. Slouch. Twitch.
7. Criticize your former employers.
8. Ask the salary or pay until you've been offered the position.
9. Expect too much too soon. No one owes you a job. You have to earn it.
10. Include false information on your application or in the interview.

### Demonstrate Soft Skills in Interviews

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