

# Electronic Communication Skills

**Unit:** Employment and Professionalism

**Problem Area:** Communication Skills

**Lesson:** Electronic Communication Skills

■ **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Demonstrate proper telephone etiquette.**
- 2 Demonstrate proper email etiquette.**
- 3 Demonstrate proper conduct for other communication technologies.**

■ **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

E-unit(s) corresponding to this lesson plan. CAERT, Inc.  
<http://www.mycart.com>.

Stack, Laura. "12 Tips for Better Email Etiquette," *Microsoft Office*. Accessed Sept. 8, 2012. <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook-help/12-tips-for-better-e-mail-etiquette-HA001205410.aspx>.

"Telephone Etiquette 101," *University of Missouri: College of Business*. Accessed Sept. 8, 2012. <http://business.missouri.edu/341/default.aspx>.



## ■ **Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

## ■ **Key Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ blind carbon copy (BCC:)
- ▶ carbon copy (CC:)
- ▶ etiquette
- ▶ signature
- ▶ spam

## ■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

*Choose two students to act out the following script so they can demonstrate how poor communication skills can affect a business. Explain that Student 1 is a new employee at Hanson Textiles, and Student 2 works for one of the company's contractors. Make a ringing sound to indicate the beginning of a phone call.*

- ◆ *Student 1: Yeah?*
- ◆ *Student 2: Hello... is this Hanson Textiles?*
- ◆ *Student 1: Yep.*
- ◆ *Student 2: May I please speak with Susan Davis?*
- ◆ *Student 1: She's sick today. Call back tomorrow.*
- ◆ *Student 2: I'm calling from Anderson Apparel. I have a question about a recent order. Is there someone else who might be able to help me?*
- ◆ *Student 1: Probably not. Call back tomorrow. (Hang up the phone.)*

*After the exercise, ask the students about their impression of Hanson Textiles based on the employee representing the company on the phone. Ask Student 2 to describe how he or she felt when getting short, unhelpful answers. Explain that the person answering a company's telephone often makes the first impression on potential clients or contractors, so it is important to use proper etiquette and good communication skills at all times.*

# CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Demonstrate proper telephone etiquette.

**Anticipated Problem:** What is proper telephone etiquette?

- I. Proper telephone etiquette
  - A. **Etiquette** is the standards of behavior expected in specific situations.
    1. A telephone call may be a client’s first contact with a business.
    2. Basic customer service may be conducted by phone, such as:
      - a. Accepting or placing orders
      - b. Handling requests, questions, or complaints
      - c. Building relationships with clients
  - B. Greeting
    1. Answering the phone
      - a. An employee should be polite and friendly.
      - b. An employee should state the company name and his or her name.
      - c. An employee should ask how he or she may help.
      - d. An example would be: “Thank you for calling Tucker Textiles. This is Amy. How may I help you?”
    2. Making a call
      - a. An employee should state his or her name and company.
      - b. An employee should briefly state the purpose of the call.
      - c. An employee should be polite.
      - d. For instance, the employee might say: “This is Amy, with Tucker Textiles. I’m returning Mr. Smith’s phone call about a problem with the order you just received. Is he available?”
  - C. Voicemail and answering machines
    1. Outgoing messages should be brief.
      - a. An employee should state his or her name and request a message.
      - b. For example: “This is Jennifer Wright. I am unable to take your call, so please leave a message.”
    2. Incoming messages should include only essential information.
      - a. An employee should state his or her name and phone number.
      - b. An employee should briefly state the reason for the call.
      - c. For instance: “This is Jennifer Wright with Tucker Textiles. My number is 555-4397. I am calling to follow up on the brochures I ordered last week.”

#### D. Customer service

1. When speaking on the telephone, an employee should address the other individual by name. It may be necessary to write down the person's name after he or she answers the phone.
  - a. It helps make a personal connection.
  - b. It helps the speaker remember the name.
2. An employee should ask permission before placing a caller on hold and thank a caller who has been on hold.
  - a. This practice shows the caller his or her time is valued.
  - b. It is best to offer an alternative of returning the call later.
  - c. An employee may say: "I need to check on the status of your order. May I place you on hold for a moment, or would you prefer I call you back when I get that information?" "Thank you for holding, Mr. Smith. I have the information you wanted."
3. The employee should speak in a clear and professional manner.
  - a. Excellent communication skills (e.g., grammar and enunciation) are essential.
  - b. Professional language (e.g., no swearing or slang) must be used at all times.

**Teaching Strategy:** Use VM–A. Ask students if they have to answer the phone where they work. If so, how do they answer? If they are not employed, how do their parents or friends answer the phone where they work? Have a discussion about some of the most and least effective ways to answer the phone at a business.

**Objective 2:** Demonstrate proper email etiquette.

**Anticipated Problem:** What is proper email etiquette.

#### II. Proper email etiquette

- A. Email should be used in a professional manner.
  1. No personal emails should be sent from a company account.
    - a. Many companies explicitly prohibit personal email during work hours.
    - b. Even if it is not prohibited, employers may have access to all employees' email.
    - c. Employees should not forward jokes, chain letters, etc. on a company account.
  2. Emails should be brief and should contain only relevant information.
  3. Emails should be polite and should include "please" and "thank you" when appropriate.
  4. Employees should respond to emails in a timely manner.

5. Professional emails should include a **signature** (contact information, such as name, title, and telephone number that appears at the end of an email message).
6. Employees should address emails carefully.
  - a. **Carbon copy (CC:)** is a feature that sends a copy of the message to another email address (other than the main recipient of the message).
  - b. **Blind carbon copy (BCC:)** is a feature that sends a copy of the message to another email address, without showing the name and address to other recipients.
  - c. **Reply** sends a response to the original sender.
  - d. **Reply all** sends a response to the sender and everyone who received the original email.
  - e. **Spam** is unsolicited bulk email that usually contains advertisements. In some cases, opening spam email may cause a virus on the computer. Employees should never open or forward spam email on their professional accounts.
- B. Employees should follow proper formatting.
  1. They should include a greeting and a closing.
  2. They should use plain font and black type.
  3. They should use proper capitalization and punctuation.
    - a. They should not use all capital letters or all lower case letters.
    - b. They should use complete sentences.
    - c. They should avoid the excessive use of exclamation points.
  4. They should check for errors.
    - a. They should use spell check.
    - b. No typos should be present.
  5. They should avoid abbreviations (except commonly accepted business terms).

**Teaching Strategy:** *Distribute copies of VM–B. Have your students open their email. Ask if any of them need help finding the carbon copy or blind carbon copy line, as emails may vary. In addition, you may want to display examples of appropriate and inappropriate emails for a class discussion.*

**Objective 3:** Demonstrate proper conduct for other communication technologies.

**Anticipated Problem:** What is the proper conduct for other communication technologies?

- III. Proper communication technologies
  - A. Technology provides new ways to communicate, which can help employees and business owners market a product or service.

1. Texting is a fast way to relay information.
    - a. Before sending a text message, the employee should ask the individual if he or she prefers that method of communication.
    - b. An employee should not check or send text messages while talking to someone (e.g., a client or supervisor) or during meetings.
  2. Social media may be useful in promoting a business or making contact with potential clients.
    - a. *Facebook*
    - b. *Twitter*
  3. The Internet allows people to access information about the company 24 hours a day.
    - a. Company websites
    - b. Blogs
    - c. Webcasts (copyright issues)
- B. Technology blurs the lines between private and professional time.
1. Employers or potential employers may judge an employee based on personal postings, such as photos on *Facebook* or a blog about inappropriate behavior at a party. In some cases, employers may fire workers for postings made during personal time.
  2. Employers often research a job candidate online and decline to hire someone with inappropriate postings on the Internet.

**Teaching Strategy:** Use VM–C. Ask students to Google themselves to see what a potential employer could learn about them online. Have a discussion about information they feel they may need to remove from their social media sights. Assign LS–A.

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may be used in the Review/Summary.
- **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

## ■ Answers to Sample Test:

### Part One: Matching

1. c

2. b
3. d
4. e
5. a

### Part Two: Completion

1. capital
2. Reply
3. service
4. spam
5. signature
6. Social
7. text

### Part Three: Short Answer

1. Answers will vary, but they should include the following information: Employers or potential employers may judge an employee based on personal postings, such as photos on *Facebook* or a blog about inappropriate behavior at a party. In some cases, employers may fire workers for postings made during personal time. Employers often research a job candidate online and decline to hire someone with inappropriate postings on the Internet.
2. Answers will vary, but they should include four of the following: telephone, email, text messages, websites, blogs, webcasts, *Facebook*, and *Twitter*.
3. Ask the person if you may put him or her on hold, or offer to call back later. Thank the person who has been on hold.

# Electronic Communication Skills

## ► Part One: Matching

**Instructions:** Match the term with the correct definition.

- a. blind carbon copy (BCC:)
- b. carbon copy (CC:)
- c. etiquette
- d. signature
- e. spam

- \_\_\_\_ 1. The standards of behavior expected in specific situations
- \_\_\_\_ 2. A situation in which a copy of the message is sent to another email address in addition to the main recipient
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Contact information, such as name, title, and telephone number that appears at the end of an email message
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Unsolicited bulk email that usually contains advertisements
- \_\_\_\_ 5. A situation in which a copy of the message is sent to another email address, without showing the address to the other recipients

## ► Part Two: Completion

**Instructions:** Provide the word or words to complete the following statements.

- 1. When sending an email, avoid using all \_\_\_\_\_ letters, which may be interpreted as “yelling.”
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ sends a response to the original sender.
- 3. Basic customer \_\_\_\_\_ often is conducted by phone.





# TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

---

- ◆ Begin every phone call with a greeting.
- ◆ Be polite.
- ◆ Keep messages brief.
- ◆ Ask permission before placing a caller on hold.
- ◆ Speak in a professional manner.



# EMAIL ETIQUETTE

---

## Addressing an email message

**To:** sends an email to those listed

**CC:** (carbon copy) sends a copy of the message to those listed

**BCC:** (blind carbon copy) sends a copy of the message to those listed, without showing the address to the other recipients



# BUSINESSES AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology allows businesses to reach out to potential customers and to communicate in a variety of ways, such as:

- ◆ Text messages
- ◆ Websites
- ◆ Blogs
- ◆ Webcasts
- ◆ *Facebook*
- ◆ *Twitter*



# Practicing Telephone Etiquette

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to practice telephone etiquette.

## Objective

Practice telephone etiquette appropriate in an office setting.

## Materials

- ◆ writing utensil
- ◆ paper

## Procedure

1. Create a script you could use when you answer the phone at a business office. Include a greeting, plus the wording you would use to put a client on hold, transfer a client to another employee, or ask to take a message.
2. Practice various scripts with a classmate. Role-play the following scenarios:
  - Remain calm when the caller is upset about something.
  - Tactfully end a phone call when the caller just wants to chat at length about non-business subjects.
  - Ask to call back if you do not know the answer to a question.
  - Place a call when you must first speak to a receptionist before reaching your intended party. The receptionist may ask for the reason for the call. Provide a brief explanation.
3. Ask classmates for an evaluation of your telephone etiquette.

