

SOCIAL SKILLS



Lesson: Social Skills

This lesson looks at what social skills include and how we can develop them in order to have better relationships with others. It also gives students the opportunity to role-play different situations.

Level: Intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B1 and above)

Time: 60-90 minutes

How to use this lesson:

This lesson is designed to be done in class. When you do Worksheet B, you can either fold the worksheet in half or cut it so that each student in a pair looks at the correct set of prompts. Worksheet C contains an essay for students to do as follow-up homework. You might want to point out the essay title at the start of the lesson so that students can begin thinking about how they might write the essay.

Teacher's notes

Worksheet A

- 1 Go through the introductory paragraph with the class and explain anything that students are unsure of. Then allow 3-4 minutes for students to fill in the gaps. They should work alone for this. Elicit answers and conduct a discussion using the prompt questions given below.

Answers/Prompts

- 1 think about what you say and what other people say.

Why do you need to do this? (You need to choose your words carefully and not offend someone. Some people are sensitive about certain things. Everyone deserves to be listened to, etc.)

- 2 get on with other people and avoid arguments.

How do you do this? (Sometimes you need to hold your tongue. You may need to walk away if one of you is angry. You need to be calm, etc.)

- 3 notice how other people feel.

What should you look/listen for? (Do the person's words match their body language? Are they looking at you or avoiding eye contact? What about their tone of voice – do they sound angry/upset/excited, etc?)

- 4 take turns with other people.

When might you need to do this? (There are many situations, from classroom activities to conversations to free-time activities. Even a simple activity like playing your favourite songs to your friend can break down if the friend never has the chance to play their songs.)

- 5 use good manners and be polite.

What does this mean? (There are many examples, from holding the door open for someone to saying 'please' and 'thank you'. We shouldn't push in front of others. We should speak nicely to older people. What sort of bad manners have your students seen? What do they think about people who do this?)

- 6 be a good speaker as well as a good listener.

What does this mean? (Learning to say the right things. Saying what you mean. Paying attention when others speak. Making encouraging noises. Putting down your mobile phone, etc.)

Finally, ask the class if they can think of any other social skills that they consider to be important. Prompt, if necessary with: *being able to start a conversation, avoiding talking about yourself all the time, joining in a conversation, inviting people, making sure nobody feels left out, etc.*



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- 2 **Begin by asking, 'Why are social skills important?' Answers might include things like: to fit into society, to make new friends, to develop better relationships, to avoid fights, so that people like you, etc.**

Refer students to the list of suggestions. They can work in pairs for this if you prefer. Ask them to decide on the most useful pieces of advice in the list. When everyone has had time to think about the ideas, elicit suggestions. Encourage as many students to contribute as possible. You can prompt with questions such as:

- ▶ *What do you think is the best piece of advice? Why?*
- ▶ *How could ... help?*
- ▶ *How easy/difficult is it to ...?*
- ▶ *What sort of things can we say to show that we are listening?*
- ▶ *Is there anything on the list that you think is not particularly useful?*
- ▶ *Can you add any other suggestions?*

Worksheet B

- 3 **In this role-play activity, students have the opportunity to practise what they might say in three different social situations.**

Put students in pairs. Tell them (or ask them to decide) who is Student A and who is Student B. Make sure they look at the correct set of prompts.

Allow a few minutes for students to read through their roles in the first situation. Make sure everyone understands what they are going to do. Tell them to begin thinking about what they might say. Point out that there is some useful language there but they do not have to use these exact phrases if they don't want to. They may need a further few minutes to organise their thoughts. They can make notes but they should not rely heavily on them when they are speaking – the conversations should be as natural as possible.

Pairs start acting out the first situation on their own. Aim to move around so that you can hear parts of the different conversations.

When all pairs have finished, you might wish to choose one or more pairs to act out the situation in front of the class. The other students could comment afterwards on how effective they were. Tell students to think about things like body language and tone of voice, as well as the actual words chosen.

Repeat for the second situation, followed by the third. If further practice is needed, students can switch roles or change pairs.

- 4 **Encourage students to look at their strengths and weaknesses in the role-play activity. Ask the questions on their worksheet. Elicit answers from as many students as possible. You can prompt further by asking questions such as:**

- ▶ *Was it easier or harder because you knew the person?*
- ▶ *Is it different doing this in English compared to your own language?*
- ▶ *Was anyone thinking about their body language?*
- ▶ *Were you looking at the other person?*
- ▶ *Did anyone speak too loudly or too quietly?*
- ▶ *Were you a good listener?*
- ▶ *Did you notice how the other person felt?*
- ▶ *Was it easy to take turns?*
- ▶ *Did you use good manners? / Were you polite?*



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Worksheet C

- 5** In this exercise, students plan an essay which they will write for homework. Students who have not had much practice at writing such essays will find it easier to write one if they first complete the plan in class. Note that the plan suggested on Worksheet C is just one way of doing this essay. If your students can suggest a different structure, check that it will fully answer the question.

Point out that an organised and well-paragraphed essay which answers the question is likely to achieve a pass mark even if there are mistakes. In contrast, an essay which is badly organised or off-topic is likely to fail.

There is plenty of material in this lesson for students to choose from. Stress that students should not attempt to include everything – there is a danger that they might write lists, rather than well-constructed and varied paragraphs. Instead, encourage them to choose main points (or topic sentences) for the paragraphs in the main body. These can then be supported by examples and/or explanations (see below).

Help students build up their plan by discussing the following steps with the class, inviting further suggestions:

Introduction

Point out that, in an essay of this length, two sentences should be enough. These could include a general comment about social skills, e.g. *Social skills are very important in our lives because ...*

This can be followed by an opinion, e.g. *I believe that we should all learn these skills and aim to improve them.* This second sentence also serves the purpose of acknowledging the question and preparing the reader for the main body.

Paragraph 2

This paragraph deals with the first part of the question: *What are the most important social skills?* Students should choose 2-3 of the social skills discussed in exercise 1, e.g. *thinking about what you / other people say and using good manners / being polite.* This should form the first sentence of the paragraph (the topic sentence). The paragraph could therefore begin with a clear statement such as: *I believe that the most important social skills are thinking about what you say and using good manners.* (Students may, of course, choose different points.)

This now needs to be supported with explanations and/or examples, such as:

- ▶ *I believe it is important to (think about what you say) because ...*
- ▶ *If you don't (think about what you say), problems can happen, such as ...*
- ▶ *(Using good manners) is also important because ...*
- ▶ *Examples of (good manners) include ...*

Paragraph 3

This paragraph deals with the second part of the question (ways to improve social skills) and the first sentence should clearly reflect this, e.g. There are several ways to improve our social skills. This topic sentence is supported by example(s) and/or explanation(s) as in paragraph 2. Remind students that there are suggestions to choose from in exercise 2. Their supporting sentences could begin something like this:

- ▶ *One way to improve them is to ...*
- ▶ *This would ...*
- ▶ *We could also ...*
- ▶ *If we did this, ...*

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Paragraph 4

Some essay questions require students to discuss three points. As this particular essay question only requires students to cover two points (discussed above in paragraphs 2 and 3), this fourth paragraph is optional. In some cases, students might still feel that they want to say more. Ask them what they could write in this paragraph (if, for example, paragraphs 2 and 3 are very short). Suggestions include:

- ▶ *More information about what is written in paragraphs 2 and 3.*
- ▶ *Why good social skills are important.*
- ▶ *What happens as a result of bad social skills.*

Conclusion

As in the introduction, students only need two (possibly three) sentences here. Each conclusion will be different depending on what is contained in the main body, but students should be encouraged to think about these possibilities:

- ▶ *A summary of the main body.*
- ▶ *An opinion about a world with/without social skills.*
- ▶ *The benefits of learning good social skills (if not already covered in paragraph 4).*
- ▶ *Their own personal 'philosophy' related to the subject. For example:*
 - I believe that there are many problems in the world but if we develop good social skills, we can ...
 - We have to live with other people and good social skills can help us to ...
 - If we learn to ... we can not only ... but also ...
 - Nobody is perfect but I feel that we should all try to ...

Notes on marking the essay

Naturally, you will want students' essays to have varied sentences and paragraphs. However, it is worth bearing in mind that a well-constructed essay with well-chosen, clearly-made points can easily achieve a pass mark *despite* its imperfections. By all means correct the mistakes, but give credit for logical flow and organisation. The biggest mistakes are the ones where the meaning is not clear – these should be the main focus of your attention when marking and discussing the essays.



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Worksheet B: Student A

3 Role-play Student A. Look at the situations below. Your teacher will give you instructions.

1 You have met Student B before but you have never really spoken. Ask him/her about his/her hobbies or interests. Listen carefully and try to ask questions.

Useful vocabulary: *What are you into? / What do you like doing? / Have you got any hobbies? / When did you start ... ? / How often do you ... ? / How/When/Where do you ... ?*

2 Tell Student B about something good/bad/interesting that happened to you.

Useful vocabulary: *It was five years ago / last week / I was ... / I didn't know that ... / Afterwards, ... / Without me realising, ... / I decided to ...*

3 Student B is new in your class. You and your friends want to get to know him/her. Invite him/her to do something with you. If he/she refuses, suggest something else. Keep suggesting things.

Useful vocabulary: *Would you like to ... ? / How about ... ? / What about going/coming to ... ?*

4 Discuss your performance with your teacher and other members of the class. Think about these questions:

- ▶ How did you perform?
- ▶ What were the hardest and easiest things for you?
- ▶ How could you improve?



Worksheet B: Student B

3 Role-play Student B. Look at the situations below. Your teacher will give you instructions.

1 Student A is going to ask questions about the things you like doing. Talk enthusiastically about one or two things you enjoy. Try to give as much information as possible.

Useful vocabulary: *I really like ... / I spend most of my time ... / I usually ...*

2 Student A is going to describe something that happened. Listen and show interest. Encourage him/her to keep talking.

Useful vocabulary: *Really? / Wow! / That sounds good/strange/painful/etc. / So what did you do then? / How did you ... ?*

3 Student A is going to invite you to do something so that the/she and his/her friends can get to know you. Say no to the first two suggestions (and politely explain why). Accept the third invitation.

Useful vocabulary: *I'm sorry, I can't because / I'm afraid I have to ... / I won't be here – sorry! / That sounds lovely!*

4 Discuss your performance with your teacher and other members of the class. Think about these questions:

- ▶ How did you perform?
- ▶ What were the hardest and easiest things for you?
- ▶ How could you improve?

Student's copy



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Worksheet C

- 5 Read the essay question below and discuss the things you could write about. Make notes in the paragraph plan. Write the essay for homework.

Write an essay (150-180 words) in answer to the question:

What are the most important social skills and how can we improve them?

PARAGRAPH PLAN

Introduction (Say something general about social skills, e.g. How important are they? What do they include?)

Paragraph 2 (What are the most important social skills? Give reasons/examples.)

Paragraph 3 (How can we improve social skills? Give reasons/examples.)

Paragraph 4 (Add your own ideas. Give reasons/examples.)

Conclusion (Make a closing comment based on the things you have written.)

Student's copy



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