

Activity: Telephone- Perception & Conflict Management
**Careers, Pathways, or Skills to Highlight: Essential Employability Skills,
Conflict Management**

Grade Range: 3rd - 8th

Time: 20-40 Minutes (Icebreaker vs. Full Classroom Lesson)



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Based on the CRAMMS lesson by University of Oregon (Conflict Resolution Activities for Middle School Skill-Building), introduce the lesson, Telephone. Ask students if they have ever played the game Telephone before. What do they remember about the game? Explain to students that today they will be learning about questioning reliability and validity of information and rumors they hear, and how broken communication can lead to conflicts.
2. Depending on the layout of your classroom, arrange seats in a large circle. If unable to arrange seats, have students stand in a large circle. Mentors should join the circle between students.
3. One mentor whispers a short narrative into the ear of the student sitting to their left. The narrative should be no more than 2-3 sentences. Use the narratives provided on the Telephone Narrative Prompts or mentors or students can create their own.
4. Ask that student whisper the same sentences, word for word, as best they can to the student to their left, and so on, until the tale reaches the last student in the circle. Everyone should hear and say the narrative once.
5. Ask the last student to hear the narrative say aloud what they were told.
6. Compare the last narrative to what the original narrative was. Have the student or mentor say allowed the narrative with which you began.
 - o How do the two narratives compare?
 - o What, if anything, was a major shift or change in the narrative?
 - o How does the changed narrative affect people's feelings on the subject?
 - o How would the changed narrative potentially lead to conflict?
7. Play multiple rounds starting at different places in the circle each time. Play each round using a different Telephone Narrative Prompt.
8. End the lesson asking students to reflect on the game.
 - o How many people heard and repeated the sentences we actually began with? (See how early the communication broke down.)
 - o How and why did the communication break down? Ask the person who contributed to the break down of the communication how and why it happened. Did they mishear something or was it intentional?
 - o How might communicating like this lead to problems? Could this problem lead to conflict?
 - o Have you ever been involved in a game of telephone in real life? What was that like?
 - o What are some ways we can prevent miscommunications like this from happening?
 - o Does miscommunication just happen in person? Where else can this happen? Can it happen online? Over text?
 - o How can students make sure what they hear or read is true before telling others about it or forming an opinion about someone or something?

SYNOPSIS

Students will learn about questioning reliability and validity of information and rumors they hear, and how broken communication can lead to conflicts.

MATERIALS

Telephone Narrative Prompts. We suggest printing out one per mentor so that there are enough to pass around the classroom if needed. Note: There is a Telephone Narrative Prompt for 3rd-5th and 6th-8th.

TIPS & EXTENSIONS

Tie into the lesson and activity how broken communication can lead to conflicts. Is this just broken communication in person? Does this happen online? How do students make sure what they hear or read is true?

If there are students in your class with the same name as in the prompts, please change them.



Telephone Narrative Prompts 3rd-5th Grade

- There was a huge ordeal in Mrs. Jones' room second period. Jack got mad at Sergio for repeatedly knocking his books off his desk, and they started yelling like crazy. I heard they both got suspensions.
- Elliot likes Rachel but there's no way she likes him back. He's always hovering around and doing things for her, but I think she thinks they're just friends. Plus, I heard she has a crush on Lawson.
- Oh man you missed the wildest PE, like two people cried. Justin was throwing the dodgeballs way too hard and the whole other team was getting mad. They hit him with like three balls at once and he lost it. You know how he hates to lose.
- Nobody knows where Silvia's been. She her family just moved without telling anyone and now they live in Florida or Florence or somewhere. But Jackie saw her sister at the mall this weekend so maybe that's not true.
- Hey did you hear about the new kid? He just moved from the middle of nowhere, like West Virginia or something. I think his name is Max. I heard he's missing teeth because he hasn't ever brushed them! Gross!
- Veronica has been eating lunch in the bathroom again. I heard her and her BFF Susan got into a big fight over the weekend about Susan inviting Tiffaney to a sleepover over Veronica. Do you think Tiffaney is Susan's new BFF?
- Huston told everyone I bike to school because my family's too poor to own a car. Ugh, he's such liar and what does he know, anyway? I bike because I live close to school and I like to be able to go wherever I want after.
- Sally's birthday party is coming up. Not everyone from our class was invited because Sally wanted to keep it small. I heard Jimmy's mom threw a fit because Jimmy wasn't invited and now the whole class is invited to the party.
- Hey did you hear?! Ms. Smith is giving all of her students an extra hour of recess if they turn in their report on Friday. Students who don't turn in their report will have to stay inside and help her clean the classroom.



Telephone Narrative Prompts 6th-8th Grade

- There was a huge ordeal in Mrs. Jones' room second period. Jack got mad at Sergio for repeatedly knocking his books off his desk, and they started yelling like crazy. I heard they both got suspensions.
- Elliot likes Rachel but there's no way she likes him back. He's always hovering around and doing things for her, but I think she thinks they're just friends. Plus, I heard she has a crush on Lawson.
- Oh man you missed the wildest PE, like two people cried. Justin was throwing the dodgeballs way too hard and the whole other team was getting mad. They got him with like three balls at once and he lost it. You know how he hates to lose.
- Did you hear what happened at the football game with Kelsey and Malcolm? It's all anyone's talking about. Apparently, they had a huge fight in front of everyone and broke up. I don't even know if our football team won the game.
- Nobody knows where Silvia's been. She her family just moved without telling anyone and now they live in Florida or Florence or somewhere. But Jackie saw her sister at the mall this weekend so maybe that's not true.
- I heard Mr. Rhinehart got fired and that's why he's not a school anymore. The substitutes only say they don't know when he'll be back, but I bet it's never. Someone said he was caught stealing a computer from the computer lab.
- I think Graham is super cute but I'm embarrassed to tell him. Will you talk to him, pleeeeeease? See if he likes me or not. But you can't tell him I asked you to, just bring it up randomly and let me know what he says.
- Huston told everyone I bike to school because my family's too poor to own a car. Ugh, he's such liar and what does he know, anyway? I bike because I live close to school, and I like to be able to go wherever I want after school lets out.
- I heard Jimmy got a job at McDonald's to help his mom pay for things for all his younger siblings. Do you think it's true? I heard Jimmy's mom lost her job last month so maybe it is.
- I heard Sally started a business writing other students' papers. Steve told me Sally charges \$20 a paper and guarantees at least a B. Do you think our English teacher Ms. Smith knows?