



Communication and digital skills at work

Age range: 16-19

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



Session overview

Time	Key learning outcomes	Resources
30-60 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of communicating at work Model how to write a cover email as part of a job application Describe how and why presentations are used in work and when looking for a job Explain the role of collaboration in the workplace Identify a selection of digital tools that can be used to collaborate, build and share presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating and digital skills at work student worksheet Communicating and digital skills at work presentation slides

Remember that you can refer to the guiding principles for establishing a safe learning environment in the Appendix section of the LifeSkills content guide. This includes suggestions for signposting students to further support. The content guide can be downloaded [here](#).

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Introduction

The use of technology is becoming more significant as economic, societal and technological forces are changing the world of work, with many jobs which are currently not digitally reliant expecting to grow and demand these skills. Running alongside this are a set of core transferable skills which are becoming increasingly important to employers such as problem solving, communication and creativity – jobs which require these types of skills will also need a workforce who can apply them in a digital way. Therefore, there is an increasing importance for young people, as they learn skills, to explore how they can apply them digitally.

When it comes to communicating it's a given that we should adapt our style to the situation. In this digital age it is even more essential that we are all able to learn to adapt our tone of language and how we talk to multiple people, often across the globe, with different attitudes and competing opinions, when using digital platforms. It has never been more important for young people to be confident and professional when it comes to using their digital voice to the maximum benefit of themselves and the organisation that they are representing.

Activity one

Communicating at work

1. Thinking about different methods of communication

- Explain to the students that communicating well is an essential skill throughout our lives. Our ability to communicate affects our job prospects when we are looking for work and our effectiveness with colleagues and customers in the workplace
- Ask the students to think of all the different ways in which people communicate at work, e.g. presenting, listening, talking face-to-face, text, instant messenger, video conference, email, social media. Students can record their suggestions in a mind map, discuss in pairs and then feedback to the class
- Emphasise that it is important we communicate well regardless of the channel or method we use. However, some ways of communicating are better than others in certain situations – it depends on who we are communicating with, the content, the purpose and how quickly we need a response

2. The best use of different communication methods

- Give pairs the **Digital communication methods student worksheet** on tablets/computers if available. Give them a few minutes to note down when each communication method might be useful in the workplace or when looking for a job. They can also add examples of platforms or channels that they know
- Show **slides 2-11** in turn. After each one, ask pairs to discuss if the best communication method has been chosen in each scenario. Prompt them to think about:
 - If the communication is about sharing information or something that requires discussion
 - If a quick response is required
 - If the communication method might create potential problems
 - If there is a more effective alternative
- After allowing a short time for discussion, ask pairs for feedback. Is there a consensus amongst the class? Click on the slide and compare the summary with their suggestions

Activity one

Communicating at work (cont'd)

- Use **slide 12** to summarise the communication methods and check they understand when they can be most useful:

Communication methods	Examples of platforms and channels	Useful when...
Web-conferencing	Skype, Webex, Adobe Connect	Discussion is needed to reach an agreement In-person meetings are not possible
Instant messenger (IM)	Windows Live Messenger, IM through Facebook, Skype	Short, informal and quick exchanges are needed
Email		Lots of people need to receive the same information A yes or no answer is needed to a simple question
Video	YouTube	Complex information needs to be shared Information needs to be presented personally but in-person meetings are not possible
Social media	Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook	Bite-sized information needs to be communicated quickly, simply and regularly Reactions and feedback from other people are important Communicating with customers
Email		Lots of people need to receive the same information A yes or no answer is needed to a simple question
Blog or website	WordPress.com, Blogger	More detailed information or thoughtful ideas need to be presented
Mobile phone		Discussion is needed to reach an agreement Information needs to be presented personally but in-person meetings are not possible

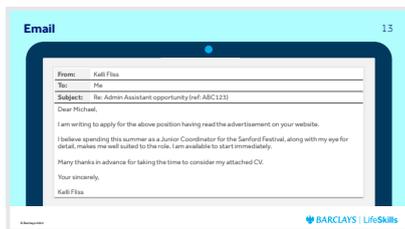
Activity one

Communicating at work (cont'd)

3. Negative outcomes from using the wrong form of communication

- Talk with the students about how easily written communications can be misinterpreted or can come across as rude or dismissive if they are not written well. Ask students to think about one or more of the scenarios discussed and suggest negative outcomes that could result from choosing an inappropriate method of communication. You could also offer your own experience from a work context
- Ask students to return to the mind map they created at the start of the activity and add, using a different coloured pen/pencil, any additional thoughts they have

4. Composing an email



- Ask the students to think about the ways they use email to communicate, and types of emails they send. Explain that email is currently one of the main forms of communication in the workplace and when applying for a job. It may be the first point of contact that students have with a prospective employer
- Ask students to search the [Job Board](#) for a role they are interested in. You can load it at the front of the classroom or ask students to explore it on laptops or tablets if they are available
- Using the **Email to a prospective employer student worksheet** on tablets/computers if available, ask the students to write a 60–80 word email to a prospective employer summarising why they are interested in the job. Prompt them to think about the difference between this type of email and one they might send to a friend or family member. Prompt them to think about their tone and how they might start and end the email
- After allowing time to complete the task, students can share their emails with the rest of the class if they feel comfortable. You can also show **slide 13** as an example. Draw attention to the:
 - Professional tone
 - Greeting and sign-off – ‘Dear’ and ‘Yours sincerely’
 - Relevant subject heading
 - Short summary of relevant skills and experience

5. Alternative digital methods of communication

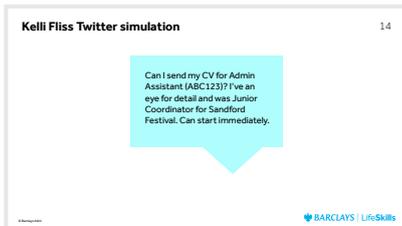
- Ask the students about other digital methods of sending the application to prospective employers.

What channels could they use, or might prospective employers expect them to use?

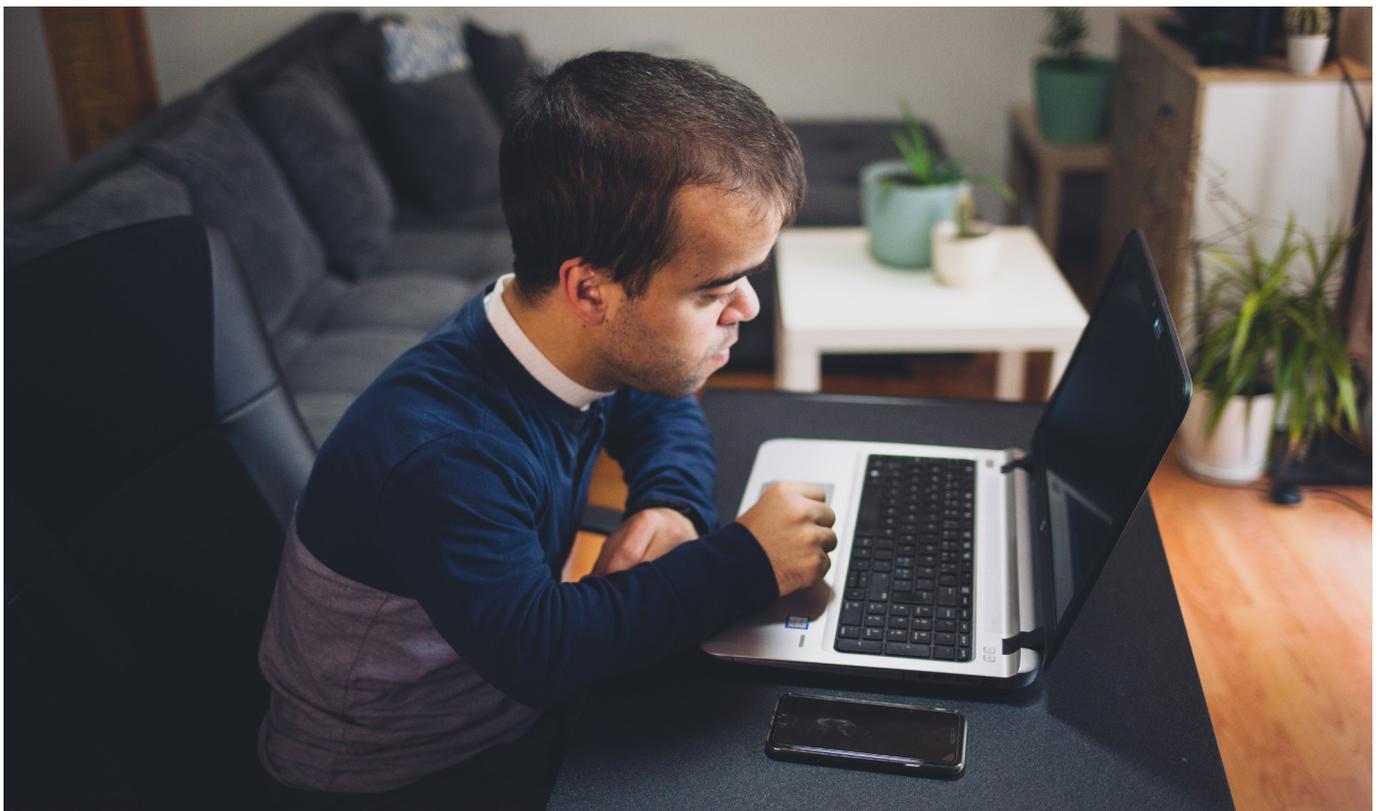
Activity one

Communicating at work (cont'd)

6. Social media as a form of communication



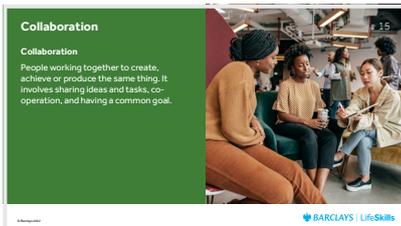
- Ask students to consider the pros and cons of using these platforms to communicate with employers, followed by e.g. online application form, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook
- Explain that they will need to use fewer words if they want their message to be effective on some of these channels. Twitter for example, only allows users to include 280 characters (letters, numbers, symbols, spaces) but most Tweets are shorter than this maximum. Ask them to condense the email (**slide 13**) into 140 characters. They can note it down in the space provided on the **Email to a prospective employer student worksheet**
- After allowing a few minutes to complete the task, students should assess their own tweet for appropriate tone and coverage of key points. You can also show **slide 14** as an example for students to compare their tweet to, and ask a few students who think their tweets meet the criteria to share with the class
- You could also use the [Interactive cover letter tool](#) as a guide, by loading it at the front of the classroom or asking students to explore it on laptops or tablets if they are available. Be mindful that this is a cover letter which goes into more depth for those employers which need more information
- To inspire students to create a winning CV and show them how social media can have a positive and negative impact on their online reputation and employability, you can log on to LifeSkills and use [the CV builder](#)



Activity two

Digital presentations

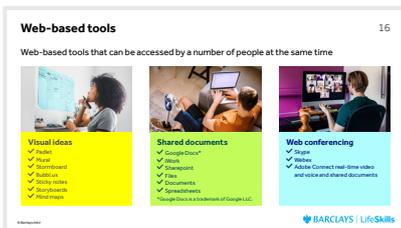
1. Collaboration



- Ask the students what they think is meant by the term 'collaboration'. Allow pairs a few minutes for discussion and then take some class feedback. Note their suggestions on the whiteboard
- Agree a class definition. Then show **slide 15** and compare it to the students' suggestions

Ask students if they have ever collaborated as part of a team. Perhaps on a school project or an interest they have outside school? Ask them to write a list in pairs

2. Digital tools for collaboration



- Before taking feedback, ask pairs to add to their list any digital tools they used to collaborate, e.g. technology, software, online platforms
- Ask pairs for feedback and write a class list of their suggestions on the whiteboard
- Show **slide 16**. Identify any of the platforms that the students are already familiar with. Explain these tools are used at work to facilitate collaboration in many different industries
- Show **slide 17**. Ask the students how they think the digital tools could be used by the team featured on the slide. After a few minutes, take some feedback from pairs. You can click on the slide to reveal some examples
- Explain that successful team need people with a range of skills: while one person might be great at coming up with new ideas (creativity), another will be good at working out whether the ideas are practical (problem solving) and someone else will know how to explain them to other people (presenting). When teams collaborate, members need to be aware that they contribute differently through the various stages of the task

Ask the students if they have ever used digital tools to build a slide-format presentation, for themselves or someone else to present?

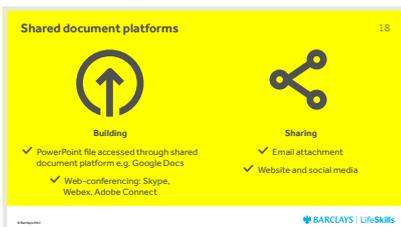
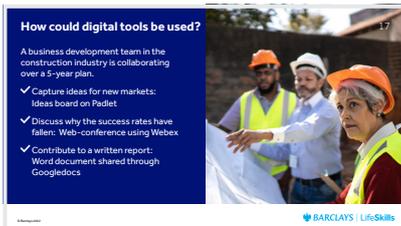
Perhaps they created PowerPoint slides?

Have they used other software or web-based platforms?

Activity two

Digital presentations (cont'd)

3. Digital presentations



- Explain that the ability to create and build presentations is viewed highly by employers. It's just as important being able to deliver a presentation well in front of an audience. It can also be key to getting a job. Applicants are often asked to present as part of an interview process, either as an individual aptitude test or as a team task
- Show **slide 17**. Explain that teams can collaborate over a PowerPoint presentation if they can access the file through a shared document platform. A team can also use a web-conferencing facility to talk to each other whilst creating the presentation. However, access to shared document platforms is usually restricted to a group of employees or a specific team. If the presentation is intended for a wider audience, it has to be shared through other mechanisms, e.g. as an email attachment or by publishing it on a website and posting a link on social media
- Show **slide 18**. Explain that there are a number of slide-format applications that have sharing built into their functionality. This means people can collaboratively create the presentation online and share it with the audience more easily. Links to the presentation can then be shared through email and social media posts. This is particularly helpful if you regularly have to present digitally at work, or you are an 'influencer' using digital presentations and social media to reach customers
- Show **slide 19**. Ask the students how they think the team featured on the slide could collaboratively build a presentation and share it with their audience. After a few minutes, take some feedback from pairs. You can click on the slide to reveal some examples

4. Web-based platforms and tools

- Before moving on, encourage the students to think about the audience in this scenario.

Will everyone in the local community use social media or be able to join a web-conference?

Would more traditional methods such as print media and in-person meetings be effective ways of sharing the presentation?

- Using the **Digital presentations student worksheet**, ask students to note down the advantages and disadvantages of using web-based platforms and tools to collaborate over presentations and share them with a wider audience. The sheet contains prompts to guide their thinking. After allowing time to complete the task, ask pairs for feedback. Write class lists of advantages and disadvantages on the whiteboard. Examples include:

Activity two

Digital presentations (cont'd)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Presentation can be shared quickly with lots of people	Team must be well-briefed on their task and clear about the purpose of the collaboration, e.g. are they being asked to proof-read the presentation or add content?
Enables teams to collaborate online, in their own time and simultaneously. Helpful for teams that can't easily meet in-person	Presentation is vulnerable to being corrupted or deleted if not adequately protected on the platform
Individuals can see each other's contributions and comments helping to advance their thinking more quickly than receiving and redistributing via email	Everyone (team and wider audience) needs access to the application or platform. Requires a device (smart phone, tablet, laptop) and internet access. Not all tools are free to use
Cuts out the need to collate contributions and synthesise feedback from multiple communications channels e.g. email, instant messenger	Written comments and feedback can come across as rude if written in haste, or be open to misinterpretation
Only one copy of the presentation exists. Protects against individuals losing their own copy, and ensures everyone in the team uses the same version as the presentation evolves.	

5. Creating presentation content

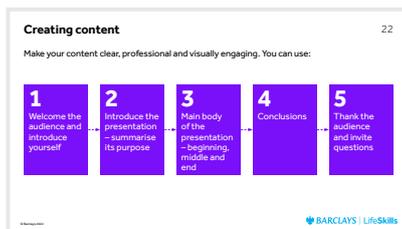


- Show **slide 20**. Explain that whatever platform you use to build and share your presentation, the content itself must be clear, professional and visually engaging
- Explain that the content of a presentation also needs to be delivered in a logical order. Working in pairs, ask the students to note down their ideas for how a presentation should be structured. After a few minutes, take some feedback from pairs. Show **slide 21** and compare the example with their suggestions

Activity two

Digital presentations (cont'd)

6. Audience interaction



Ask the students if they have ever asked a question at the end of a presentation. Or perhaps they were the presenter and had to answer a question from the audience?

- Working in pairs, ask students to think of other ways an audience can participate or interact. They may find it helpful to think about TV programmes or game shows. Allow a few minutes for discussion before taking feedback, e.g. voting, polling, answering quiz questions, giving feedback
- Show **slide 22**. Explain that digital tools can be used to involve an audience whilst the presentation is underway (in real-time), or once it is complete. The responses – votes, answers, questions – can then be presented back to the audience for example as graphs, charts. These tools are most often used at in-person meetings and conferences, although some web-conferencing platforms offer similar techniques. Some social media platforms can also be used. Twitter's # facility for example can be used to collect an audience's questions and feedback
- Show **slide 23**. Ask the students how they think the audience featured on the slide could be invited to participate in the presentation. After a few minutes, take some feedback from pairs. You can click on the slide to reveal some examples

7. Team challenge



- Organise the students into teams of 3 or 4. Use **slide 24** to explain their task
- Give instructions about the technology they can use and a timeframe for their preparations, depending on what is available. Ideally students will complete some, or all, of the task using digital tools and applications, including sharing it with the rest of the class using Skype or Webex. However, the task can be completed without using any technology if necessary
- Once the presentations are complete, show **slide 25**. Run through the top tips for digital presentations using web conferencing platforms
- Revisit the initial ratings students noted down at the start of the activity, asking them to rate themselves again, reflecting on how the activity has improved their confidence

Activity two

Digital presentations (cont'd)

Extension

- In groups, students can use one or more of the digital tools covered in the lesson to create a collaborative research report on a subject of their choice. They can also evaluate the digital tool(s) they used and explain how they could be useful in the workplace
 - Students can explore the interactive tool [Get to Grips With Big Data](#) and build a presentation using charts and graphs to display data provided about current account usage and business spending (in Your Turn With Big Data)
 - Students can take a [Skills Builder self-assessment test](#) to allow them to reflect on their own abilities, build confidence in their current skillset and focus on skills which need more development
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- To help students develop their skills why not get them to log on to LifeSkills and use the 'Presenting' section of the [Growth mindset toolkit](#). The toolkit is designed to help young people develop the key skills and mindset to support them as they transition from education into the future world of work

Summary

- Summarise by reiterating that the use of technology and digital platforms are becoming increasingly prevalent in our personal lives and at work. Employers now expect their workforce to apply their skills digitally and to adopt new technologies quickly
- Recap some of the digital communication channels such as social media and blogging that can be used when looking for a job and that employers may expect you to use in the course of your job role. Reiterate the need to adapt content for different audiences and the importance of using a professional tone. Used well, digital communications can help us secure job opportunities and thrive in the workplace
- Restate the important role of digital presentations at work and the platforms teams can use to collaboratively create and build digital content. Digital tools can also be used to encourage and facilitate audience interaction whilst a presentation is underway, or once it is complete

Communicating and digital skills at work

Digital communication methods

Use this sheet to note down when each communication method might be useful in the workplace or when looking for a job. You can also add examples of platforms or channels that you know.

Communication methods	Examples of platforms and channels	Useful when...
Web-conferencing		
Instant messenger (IM)		
Email		
Video		
Social media		
Blog		
Mobile phone		

Communicating and digital skills at work

Email to a prospective employer

Use this sheet to draft a 60-80 word email to a prospective employer that includes:

- Why you're interested in applying for the job
- A summary of your skills and experience
- A subject heading
- A formal greeting and 'sign-off'
- A professional tone
- Relevant attachments

Adapt the email from Kelli Fliss into a Twitter post using no more than 140 characters (letters, numbers, symbols and spaces).

Communicating and digital skills at work

Digital presentations

Use this sheet to note down the advantages and disadvantages of using digital tools and platforms to build and share presentations.

Think about:

- Who might need to contribute to the presentation
- The presentation's wider audience
- The relative merits of written and video/voice communications
- The technology that digital platforms require

Advantages

Disadvantages
