



## Safety Corner

Topic: Teamwork

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### Learning Objective:

Students will be able to identify five attributes of an effective team player.

Note: Students will divide into teams and play a game in which they must work cooperatively to accomplish a common goal. Consideration: The game requires a large outdoor or indoor space like a gym or facility room. The activities are listed at the end of the article.

This article will be focused around explaining the importance of teamwork and more importantly, being a team member. What examples would you share about a time that you worked as a team in a club, sport, or any other type of team?

What are the benefits of working in a team?

1. When you work as a team, together you accomplish more than one person can alone, if you distribute the work to everyone. Each person plays a vital role in accomplishing a shared goal.
2. A team brings together people with different experiences and perspectives. Therefore, you can gain greater creativity and various problem-solving approaches than working alone would provide.
3. Teams have people with different skills, strengths, and talents. Teamwork allows everyone to excel at what they do best - creating better overall outcomes.
4. Teamwork provides a greater opportunity for you to learn from someone else. As team members share their varied perspectives and exercise their unique skills, you can learn information or skills from them that you may use on your own.
5. When you work together as a team you will need to communicate frequently and clearly. Teamwork fosters better communication skills as you learn how to effectively communicate with different kinds of people with different kinds of personalities.
6. You will grow in your leadership skills in a team. As different people take turns leading and following others, you will learn how to provide direction and guide others. You will also learn how to follow the directions of others to accomplish a goal.

The benefits of working in teams are evident in many jobs. Regardless of what job or career field you choose, most people are expected to be able to work effectively with others. More now than ever before, job fields require that you work with teams of people and be able to communicate effectively with all types of individuals



There are numerous skills needed to be an effective team player in any setting, and some of those attributes are as follows:

#### Attribute 1 -Flexible &Adaptive

First, effective team members are flexible and adaptive-kind of like Transformers™. Effective team members understand that everyone brings different skills, expertise, and background knowledge to a task. In a team, everyone should have an opportunity to both lead and follow. A flexible team member understands they do not always have to do things their way. They share leadership with others. In teams, people come and go all the time and tasks change often. A flexible team member welcomes new team members readily and adapts to changes in tasks or environments without impacting the goals that need to be accomplished.

#### Attribute 2 -Active &Positive

Secondly, good team members participate actively with a positive attitude. Being an active and positive member also means speaking up or stepping up when there is something that needs to be done. Don't be afraid to try something new or creative and do your best to make it work successfully.

#### Attribute 3 -Provide Constructive Feedback

The third important attribute of an effective team member is the ability to provide constructive feedback. Constructive feedback is the ability to focus on the actions and conduct that will move you toward the goals. When you see these actions in progress, you let team members know that you appreciate them. When a fellow team member offers a suggestion that will help the team better meet the goal, you acknowledge it positively. If you see a fellow team member struggle or misunderstand the task they need to accomplish, you offer to help or provide better explanation. And if you can do so with a smile rather than a scowl, all the better! As you work in teams, seek to encourage other team members with positive words and affirmations.

#### Attribute 4 -Effective Communicators

The fourth attribute of effective team members is that they are effective communicators. They will appreciate your work and involvement on the team that much more! An effective team member must be cognizant of how they communicate both verbally and non-verbally. In teamwork at schools and on the job, you also need to communicate verbally and non-verbally. Even when you may not say anything, your body language communicates a great deal. If your arms are folded and you are slouched in your chair, it communicates to people that you really do not want to participate. And you do not have to say a word! Be careful to match your verbal language with your non-verbal language so you communicate clearly your interest in the task and desire to work well with others. If you have important information, share it with others. Listen thoughtfully to others and enthusiastically support the work of the team, if it is merited.



## Attribute 5 -Problem Solve & Resolve Conflicts

The fifth attribute of an effective team member is a skill you will need anywhere you go in life. An effective team member can solve problems and resolve conflicts. Every project or task has restrictions, limitations, or challenges. Good team members recognize this and strategize how to approach the task to be successful despite the challenges. When problems arise, a team comes together to determine how best to overcome them. And when conflicts arise, teams work together to resolve them, so they can focus on accomplishing the shared goal. People approach problems or conflicts in many ways -some approaches are helpful, some are not.

For example, some people ignore problems. That seldom works. Few problems simply go away by themselves. Good team members confront problems rather than ignore them and then work to resolve them peacefully and successfully.

Some people blame others when there is a problem. That is not a productive use of time. Focus on the problem and a possible solution, rather than blaming people and you will gain more cooperation from all parties. Some people like to gossip about a team member they perceive as a problem. That does not solve any problems but rather creates bigger ones. Other team members will lose respect and trust in the member that gossips, and should the effected party learn about negative things being said about him or her, there will likely be increased tension and conflict on the team.

Instead of gossiping about someone, sit down and talk with them. Express your desire to work cooperatively with them and ask them how the two of you can do this together. If this does not work, ask an adult to help you resolve the conflict with this person. With different personalities, skills, strengths, perceptions, approaches, and talents, conflict is a natural consequence of teamwork. But if you approach it positively and proactively, you can still accomplish your task successfully.

Today we've explored five qualities that contribute to one being a good team member. Let's see if we met our learning goals. What are five things good team members do consistently?

### Sources:

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## Activities:

### Transformation Game

Instructor: First, let's form a circle. Don't worry about where you are in the circle because it will change. You have one minute.

#### Task One - "The Zipper"

Instructor: As a class, transform into the shape of an unzipped zipper. You must arrange yourselves in that shape without any more direction from me. When you have the shape, zip up, then unzip. You have three minutes.

#### Task Two - "The Umbrella"

Instructor: Your next task is to divide yourself evenly as possible into two teams. Each team must form the shape of an umbrella. When your team has the shape, close the umbrella and open it up again.

#### Task Three - "The Tree"

Instructor: Your next task is to divide yourself into thirds. Each team must now form a tree with branches and leaves. Once your shape is formed, bend the tree, branches, and leaves like a strong gust of wind is blowing.

#### Task Four - "Silent Word Spell"

Instructor: Now divide yourself into four teams. Each team must form a letter in the word TEAM. Arrange the teams so the total word is spelled correctly. There is an additional component to the task. You must do so without speaking a word. You have three minutes.