

# **Preparing Workers**

Real-World Scenarios Using Writing,  
Reading, and Mathematical Skills

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## Preparing Workers Writing Samples

### Writing Scenario #1 - Informal Writing Doesn't Belong in the Workplace – Shay

#### Vocabulary Words

Alert  
Assistant  
Commands  
Informal  
Formal  
Veterinarian

#### Reading Selection

Shay enjoys his job at the veterinarian clinic. As a veterinarian assistant, Shay gets to work with animals. Shay also helps to train the animals so that they learn how to follow commands. Shay is a good trainer. He seems to have a natural way about himself. The animals that Shay trains always follow the commands he has taught them.

When Shay works with the pets' owners, he helps them to learn to use the same commands. To help the pets' owners, Shay writes the commands down in a notebook. A command notebook goes home with each pet.

Yesterday, Dr. Sean called Shay into his office. He praised Shay for being an excellent employee. Dr. Sean told Shay he was one of the best veterinarian assistants he has ever hired. However, Dr. Sean shares with Shay that some of the pet's owners did not like the command notebook. They were upset with the way Shay wrote the commands. Dr. Sean told Shay that he needed to write more formally. Dr. Sean explained that it was alright to use informal language when you talked with friends. However, Dr. Sean told Shay he needed to write his directions using formal language.

Shay looked at the notebook he was writing. He saw what Dr. Sean was talking about. He was writing like he talked with his friends. Shay knew exactly what to do.

*This here book will help you with commands for your pet. Like I told you during training, try and work more harder in the morning. Being that your pet is more alert, you gonna be more successful in training your pet.*

#### Think About It!

1. How is the way you talk with your friends different from the way you speak with your boss?
2. How would you describe formal writing?
3. What informal expressions did Shay use when writing directions? How could Shay have written his directions using formal speech?

## Writing Scenario #2 - Writing Workplace Notes - The Beginning and the End - Cindi

### Vocabulary Words

Apology  
Appreciate  
Convenience  
Frustrated  
Shift

### Reading Selection

Cindi works at a local convenience store. She is the night manager. Last evening, Cindi had some problems at the store. The coffee maker quit working. Cindi knows that coffee is a large part of the store's morning sales. Therefore, the coffee machine needs to be working. Because Cindi cannot fix the machine, she leaves the following note for the morning manager:

*bruce, the coffee machine is not working it needs to be fixed before the morning rush arrives i have tried fixing it but I can't get it to work i am so frustrated i know that John has fixed it in the past please make sure that this is the first thing that John does in the morning before he begins his regular shift i hope that this works for you will you please give me a call to let me know that John was able to fix the machine i would very much appreciate it i am so sorry that I had to leave you with this problem you are always a great help to me thank you  
Cindi*

When Cindi began her next shift, Bruce asked to speak with her. He told Cindi that he was upset with the note she had left. When Cindi apologized for not fixing the coffee pot, Bruce stopped her. He told her it wasn't the coffee pot, but rather the uncaring way she had written the note. Cindi was confused. She thought she had written a note of apology.

### Think About It!

1. Why was Bruce upset regarding the note that Cindi left him?
2. Is it easy to tell where Cindi's ideas begin and end? Why?
3. What grammar rules does Cindi need to know in order to write a clearer note at her workplace?

## Writing Scenario #3 – Writing Directions - Eli

### Vocabulary Words

Blistering  
Concise  
Exterior  
Fascia  
Primer

### Reading Selection

Eli works for the Hansen Exterior Painting Company. The company has recently hired some new employees. Eli has been asked to write the steps that should be followed when painting the homes in a new development. Eli has been a house painter for many years and has always been rewarded for quality work. As Eli begins to write out the different steps, he takes time to see each step in his mind and what is needed. He wants the directions to be clear, but also to be very concise. Eli spends considerable time on his directions. He is proud of what he has written. The following directions are what Eli shares with his boss, Mr. Hansen.

#### Steps to Take When Painting the Exterior of a House

1. Plan for the job by figuring how much paint you will need. Add the total of all of the individual walls together to get your grand total in area or in square feet.
2. Request the materials that you will need – paint, brushes, scrapers, tarps, high-pressure water sprayer, filler, drop cloths, masking tape.
3. Remove any old paint that is cracked, chipped, or blistering.
4. Patch all holes with filler and let it dry.
5. Sand all glossy and rough surfaces.
6. Put down drop cloths and mask the fixtures you won't be painting.
7. Remove screens on the windows.
8. Use a primer to cover any stains and always prime the entire surface if it is a new house.
9. Apply the paint starting at the top of the house and working down. Begin with the fascia and under the eaves. Next paint the gutters, then the walls, and finally the downpipes, doors, and windows.
10. Apply at least two coats of paint. Make sure to let each coat dry between paintings.
11. Clean up the worksite and make sure to clean all equipment.

Eli's boss is very pleased with the directions. Mr. Hansen knows that when a supervisor's position comes open, Eli will be his choice.

### Think About It

1. What makes Eli's directions easy to read?
2. What words does Eli use to tell the reader what steps should be taken next?
3. Why does this type of writing make Eli a valuable employee to Mr. Hansen?
4. How do you write directions at home or in your job?

## **Writing Scenario #4 – Writing a Letter of Customer Appreciation – Toni**

### **Vocabulary**

Appreciation  
Completes  
Customer satisfaction  
Edit  
Effective  
Nervously  
Patronage  
Thorough

### **Reading Selection**

Toni has just finished writing a letter of appreciation to one of the hotel's valued customers. Before she gives the letter to her boss, she completes a thorough edit. She checks that the letter uses complete sentences, correct capitalization and punctuation, and words that correctly describe what she wanted to say.

Finally, Toni has Tom, one of her fellow workers read the letter. Tom is a good writer. He always has great ideas on how to say things better. Tom reads Toni's letter. He tells Toni that she has really done a great job.

Toni takes the letter to her boss's office and places it on the desk. She looks at it one last time. Toni hopes that it is what her boss wanted. She nervously looks at the letter one last time and returns to the front desk.

That afternoon, Toni's boss comes up to the front desk. She puts the letter in front of Toni. Toni can hardly breathe. She is worried that her writing skills were not good enough. However, Toni's boss smiles and says that it is one of the best letters she has read. Toni's boss thanks her for taking the time to write such an effective letter. Toni smiles to herself. Although writing the letter took time and effort, it was worth it!

Bayside Inn  
1111 Bay Street  
El Paso, TX 11111

July 4, 2009

Mr. Hector Janssen  
784 Miracle Way  
El Paso, TX 11111

Dear Mr. Janssen:

We would like to thank you for your kind letter of appreciation. As a company that prides itself on customer satisfaction, we are honored to be selected as your hotel of choice when you visit El Paso.

Your business is much appreciated, and we will do our very best to continue to meet your travel needs. Your continued patronage and suggestions are a vital part of our hotel's growth. We appreciate your trust, and we'll do our very best to continue to provide the level of service that you have come to expect from the Bayside Inn.

Thank you again for your kind words and for continuing to provide us with the opportunity to serve both you and your business associates. If there is anything that we can do to make your stay more enjoyable, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Rai Sellars  
Executive Manager

**Think About It!**

1. What steps did Toni take before she gave the letter to her boss? Why?
2. Why do you think that Toni used a business letter format?
3. How did writing the letter help Toni in becoming a more effective writer?

## Preparing Workers Reading Samples

### Reading Scenario #1 – Beatrice and Victor

#### Vocabulary

Apologize  
Receive  
Substitute

#### Reading Selection

Victor owns a child-care center. He is proud of the good care that the children receive. When someone calls in sick, Victor must find someone else to care for the children. This is hard to do. Victor tells his workers how important they are to the children.

On Monday at 6 a.m., Beatrice calls Victor. She has a headache, runny nose, and upset stomach. Beatrice tells Victor she has the flu and cannot work today. She apologizes for having to miss work. Beatrice tells Victor she will let him know this afternoon how she is feeling. She does not want to leave Victor without a teacher for two days in a row. Victor tells her that she should take care of herself. Victor plans to care for the children in Beatrice's classroom.

At 10 a.m., Victor gets a phone call from Tricia. Tricia was supposed to be in her classroom at 8. Tricia says that her alarm did not go off. She is not sure whether she will come to work. She tells Victor that she will just use one of her sick days. Tricia tells Victor she will try to wake up on time tomorrow.

Victor must now try to find another substitute day care worker. He was counting on Tricia to be at work and do her job. He is very upset with Tricia. She did not have a good reason for not coming to work. That's the bottom line. Even though she is a good worker, Tricia is not always on time. This is the fifth time Tricia has not come to work this month. Victor wonders whether or not to fire Tricia.

#### Think About It!

1. Why should you call your workplace if you cannot go to work for the day?
2. What are good reasons not to go to work?
3. What are not good reasons for not going to work?
4. What are some reasons for losing a job?

## Reading Scenario #2 - Jan

### Reading Selection

Jan is a chef. She works at a restaurant downtown. The restaurant's kitchen has lots of equipment. It is important that everything works well. Safety is very important in Jan's job. She is proud that she has not had an accident at work.

All new workers must attend a safety class. The restaurant trains new workers to use the equipment. There are special rules to follow. Workers in the kitchen must wear uniforms and hair nets. They learn how to follow the safety rules. They are given a manual. The manual has the rules written. Workers learn what to do if they have an accident. The restaurant has an emergency number to call. It is on the bulletin board.

Simon is a new cook. Jan asks Simon to fry the potatoes. Simon tosses the potatoes in the oil. He does not look at the temperature. It is too hot! The oil spatters and burns Simon. Jan takes Simon to the hospital to have the burns treated. Jan is worried that the accident will look bad to her supervisor. The restaurant is proud to have had no accidents in the past year. Last year, Jan's supervisor gave everyone a bonus for being safe on the job. Jan wants to make sure she gets another bonus this year.

### Think About It!

1. What should Jan do? Why?
  - a. Not report the accident to her supervisor.
  - b. Report the accident and fire Simon.
  - c. Report the accident and have Simon retake the safety class.
2. What types of accidents happen at work?
3. What are some safety rules for the workplace?

## Reading Scenario #3 – Sally and Anna

### Vocabulary Words

Technology  
Promotion  
Upgrade

### Reading Selection

Sally started her job at the factory six months ago. She has learned her job quickly. She often tells other workers how to do their job. Sally feels she does a better job than the other workers.

Most of the people at the factory are close to one another. It's almost like a family. Sally hasn't spent any time getting to know her coworkers. She has been spending her time learning her new job.

Sally wants a new challenge. She wants to become a supervisor. Her supervisor is Ana. Sally tells Ana about her plan. Ana wants Sally to spend more time getting to know her coworkers. She tells Sally that it is important to work as a team. Ana also tells Sally that the company expects excellent job performance over a long period of time. Six months is not long enough. Sally is disappointed about her talk with Ana. She thinks about what Ana has said. Sally promises herself to start being part of the team.

### Think About It!

1. Why is it important to know your coworkers?
2. What attitudes are important on the job?
3. Check your own work attitudes. Read the following statements. Check the answer that best describes your personal work attitude.

### My Work Attitudes

1. I am always on time and sometimes early.	Always	Sometimes	Never
2. I am cheerful and positive.			
3. I try to solve problems on my own.			
4. I don't complain.			
5. I am able to accept criticism and learn from it.			
6. I listen to others and share my good ideas.			
7. I am willing to do extra work.			
8. I want to do well at work.			
9. I use my time well.			
10. I am careful with my employer's property.			
11. I respect leadership skills in others and work on developing my own skills.			

## Reading Scenario #4 - Tina

### Vocabulary

Equipment  
Responsibility

### Reading Selection

Tina is a physical therapist. She works with patients at the hospital. Today, Tina has a busy schedule. She must see eight patients. In her job, Tina uses different types of equipment. After each patient, Tina must clean the equipment. She then must put it in the cabinet. Tina is tired at the end of the day. She forgets to put away a mat.

The next morning, Tina's supervisor calls her into the office. The supervisor tells Tina that she did not follow the rules. A mat was left on the floor. The equipment was not cleaned well. The supervisor reviews the rules with Tina.

Tina becomes angry. She says that she did not leave the mat out. Tina says it wasn't her fault. She blames a coworker. The supervisor is unhappy. She wants Tina to be responsible. She tells Tina that it is difficult to accept when one is wrong. The supervisor wants Tina to think about what has happened. She will meet with Tina tomorrow. Tina leaves the room angry.

### Think About It!

1. People often receive criticism on the job. Which of the following is a positive way to deal with criticism? Why?
  - a. Blame yourself for the problem and tell the supervisor it will never happen again.
  - b. Listen to the criticism and think about how to fix the problem.
  - c. Deny what has happened and think of who you can blame.
2. Why is it important to accept criticism?
3. What do you think Tina will do tomorrow? Why?
  - a. Accept the criticism and make sure that her job is completed
  - b. Turn in her resignation
  - c. Stay angry and tell her boss that it is not her fault.

## Preparing Workers' Mathematics Scenarios

### Math Scenario #1 - Budgeting a Paycheck – Edward

#### Vocabulary Words

Budget  
Convenience  
Emergency  
Expensive  
Fixed Expense  
Flexible Expense  
Installment Payment  
Toiletries

#### Reading Selection

Edward has been working at the same job for over a year. He is working hard to make his monthly bill payments, so he started a part-time job on the weekends at a convenience store. Edward wants to open a savings account and deposit \$25 a month from his paycheck. He knows that having a savings account is necessary in case he has an emergency and needs extra money. However, he just has not gotten around to creating a monthly budget.

Edward does not regularly buy new clothes or things for the house. He is also very lucky that he has not been sick. He doesn't have insurance at work and knows that doctors can be expensive. Edward knows that he wastes much of his monthly income on going out with his friends after work. Some of that money could be used to start a savings account. Edward knows that would be a wise thing to do. Although Edward makes \$1710.00 a month, he always ends up with no money left at the end of the month. Edward really wants to create a budget that works.

#### Think About It!

1. Edward enjoys going out with his friends and does not want to put all of his extra earnings into a savings account. How much would you suggest that Edward save each month and still be able to go out with his friends?
2. Why is a savings account an important part of one's budget?
3. What types of expenses would you decrease in order to start a savings account? Why?
4. Help Edward budget his monthly expenses and figure out how much money he can put in his savings account. Use the following information to complete Edward's budget form.
  - Edward's monthly income from Job #1 is: \$1,345 and from Job #2 is \$365.
  - Edward has the following monthly expenses:
    - Rent payment of \$575
    - Car payment of \$165
    - Car insurance of \$50
    - Minimum credit card payment of \$25
    - Food cost of \$125

- Utilities of \$135
- Car expenses of \$120
- Personal expenses of \$55
- Entertainment expenses of \$95

**Edward's Monthly Budget Worksheet**

<b>Income</b>	
Job #1	
Job #2	
Other	
<b>Total Income</b>	
<b>Fixed Expenses</b>	
Rent	
Car Insurance	
Other	
<b>Total Fixed Expenses</b>	
<b>Installment Payments</b>	
Credit Card #1	
Credit Card #2	
Car Loan Payment	
<b>Total Installment Debt</b>	
<b>Flexible Expenses</b>	
Food	
Utilities (gas, electricity, water)	
Car Expenses (gas, oil, tolls, repairs)	
Clothing	
Personal Items (toiletries)	
Medical	
Household Items	
Entertainment	
<b>Total Flexible Expenses</b>	

Edward's income \_\_\_\_\_ minus Edward's expenses \_\_\_\_\_ (Fixed Expenses + Installment Payments + Flexible Expenses) = Money remaining \_\_\_\_\_.

## Math Scenario #2 – Figuring Commission - Maria

### Vocabulary

Commission  
Disappointed  
Estimation  
Purchases

### Reading Selection

Maria has just been hired as a sales clerk in a large department store. She is excited about her new job. She will be making a weekly salary of \$200. In addition, she will receive 5% of her sales total during the week. Maria knows that she needs to make at least \$300 a week to pay her bills. She is sure that she will be able to make more than \$100 a week from her sales commission. Maria is very disappointed when her first check arrives. She only made \$250, not enough to pay her bills. Maria wants to keep track of her commission, so that she makes \$300 on her next paycheck. Maria talks with her supervisor about how much she will need to sell. She is surprised that she will need to sell at least \$2,000 in purchases. How can that be?

Maria's boss asks her if she estimated her sales commission. Maria does not know how to use estimation. Maria's boss tells her that she can do the math in her head by using estimation. All she needs to do is round her sales to the nearest hundred dollars and multiply by 5%. Maria's boss gives her the following sales numbers and has her practice estimating her commission:

- \$3,238.98
- \$2,198.76
- \$1,548.98

Maria finds it easy to multiply numbers like \$1500 by 5 in her head. In fact, Maria has an even easier way to figure out 5% of her sales. She multiplies by 10% and then takes half of that number. For example if Maria's sales are \$2,100, she knows that 10% is \$210 and half of that is \$105. Maria is excited about her new skill in estimating. She is looking forward to using her new estimation skills when she shops. It's almost like a game!

### Think About It!

1. How do you use estimation skills in your workplace or community?
2. What are different ways that you estimate?
3. How could you use estimation when shopping for groceries so that you have enough cash to pay for your purchases?

## **Math Scenario #3 - The Computers Are Down! Counting Change – Miguel**

### **Vocabulary**

Change  
Computerized  
Customer  
Manager  
Restaurant  
Till

### **Reading Selection**

Miguel is the manager of a fast food restaurant in El Paso. The restaurant is very popular and stays busy. Miguel has just recently purchased a new computerized cash register. The cash register allows the workers to touch pictures on the screen to complete an order. The new machine also tells the workers how much change to give the customers. Since Miguel put the new system into his store, he has had few problems with customers not receiving the correct change.

Last week, a bad storm caused the cash register to stop working. Miguel was upset. However, he told his workers that they could just figure the customers' change themselves. Soon, Miguel had many customers who were upset. The workers were giving them the wrong change. Miguel watched his workers. It was evident that they did not know how to make change. One customer gave a worker a ten dollar bill and seven pennies for a meal that cost \$8.57. The worker gave the customer two dollars in change. Miguel didn't know what to do. Customers were upset and Miguel knew that his till definitely would not balance at the end of the day.

### **Think About It!**

1. If you were Miguel, what would you do in this situation?
2. Why didn't Miguel close his restaurant?
3. Do you think that people should have to prove that they can complete basic math skills before they are hired at an entry-level job? Why or why not?

## Math Scenario #4 – Payday Lenders: It’s Harder Than It Looks - Lukas

### Vocabulary

Advertisement  
Appointment  
Difficult  
Interest  
Payday Lender

### Reading Selection

Lukas is employed at the El Paso Furniture Company. He makes a good salary and is able to support his family. Because Lukas makes a good salary, he enjoys spending money on his family. Sometimes he borrows money from the bank to help him cover the monthly bills. However, the last few months have been difficult. Lukas has not had the opportunity to make any overtime. Lukas always counts on his overtime salary to pay his loans. Lukas and his wife find that they cannot pay all of their monthly bills. They are having a tough time making ends meet.

Two months ago, Lukas and his wife did not have enough money to pay their rent. The bank would not loan Lukas any more money. Lukas saw the following ad in the newspaper.

**Some Things Just Can’t Wait Until Payday!  
Get up to \$500 Today!  
It’s Fast and Easy  
Apply Now!**

**Money When You Need It, Inc.  
Just call 111-111-1111 for an appointment**

Lukas went in for an appointment. He asked the company for \$500 so he could pay his rent. All Lukas had to do was sign some forms and write the company a postdated check for \$575.00. The forms said that the company would take the rest of their money out of Lukas’s paycheck each week. They said they would “garnish” his paycheck. That means they would take out \$50 from each paycheck until Lukas had paid off the loan.

Lukas was excited that he could pay his rent. However, when he got home, Lukas and his wife read the contract. If Lukas did not pay off the loan in time, he was going to owe Money When You Need It, Inc. more than \$1,000. The interest on the loan was as much as he had borrowed! What were they going to do?

### Think About It!

1. Lukas borrowed from a company known as a “payday lender.” Did Lukas think it was as easy to get a loan as the ad said it was?
2. What advice would you give Lukas about what he could have done as an alternative to borrowing from a payday lender?
3. Do payday loans provide a necessary service to people? Why or why not?

## Preparing Workers' Writing Classroom Activities

### Writing Scenario #1 - Informal Writing Doesn't Belong in the Workplace – Shay

Introduce the lesson by having students identify how they speak or write to their friends is different from the way they speak or write at the workplace. Write the words “formal” and “informal” on the board or chart paper. Have students discuss what each word means to them in their lives. Examples may be that “formal” means using your best manners when you go out to a nice restaurant. “Informal” may mean sitting in your living room and watching a football game with your friends. Share with students that when writing in the workplace, they should always use words and phrases that are appropriate for a professional setting.

#### Extended Activity

Have students rewrite the journal entry using phrases that are more appropriate to the workplace. An example of a revised journal would be:

*This book will provide you with commands for your pet. Mornings are best for training your pet. In the morning, your pet is more alert. Therefore, you will be more successful in your training efforts in the morning.*

### Writing Scenario #2 - Writing Workplace Notes - The Beginning and the End – Cindi

#### Activity 1

Have students read the story and brainstorm ideas for why they believe Bruce was upset. Write these ideas on the board. Discuss that fellow workers often feel less important or disrespected when someone does not take the time to draft a properly written note. Workers may misinterpret what has been written or may not think that it is important or worth reading.

Explain to students that writing is all about communicating ideas. Sentences are how we package those ideas. A sentence contains a complete thought or idea. However, a reader cannot understand that idea if the reader can't figure out where it begins and where it ends. This is what beginning capitalization and end punctuation provides. Each sentence should begin with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark. Sometimes called “outside” punctuation, end punctuation marks include a period, question mark, or exclamation mark.

Review with students their revision of Cindi's note. A possible example of the note with capitalization and end punctuation corrections is as follows:

*Bruce,*

*The coffee machine is not working. It needs to be fixed before the morning rush arrives. I have tried fixing it, but I can't get it to work. I am so frustrated! I know that John has fixed it in the past. Please make sure that*

*this is the first thing that John does in the morning before he begins his regular shift. I hope that this works for you.*

*Will you please give me a call to let me know that John was able to fix the machine? I would very much appreciate it. I am so sorry that I had to leave you with this problem. You are always a great help to me.*

*Thank you!*

*Cindi*

## **Activity 2**

Have students work in teams of two and rewrite Cindi's note to Bruce. Discuss with students that punctuation is the set of symbols used in writing that guides the reader. A sentence always ends with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. Review with students the rules of end punctuation.

### **Grammar Rule Review – Make It Your Own!**

- Period – Used to end a sentence that gives information, states facts, or gives a command.
- Question Mark – Used to end a sentence that is a question.
- Exclamation point – Used to end a sentence that shows strong emotions.

Next, discuss the need for a capital letter at the beginning of a complete sentence. Students may wish to write these rules in their personal grammar journal.

### **Extended Activity**

Create a chart such as the following and place it on chart paper or on the board.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Question Mark</b>	<b>Exclamation Mark</b>

Provide students with workplace documents such as letters, memos, and emails. Have students locate different types of sentences that use each type of end punctuation marks. Discuss what type of end punctuation was used most often and why.

### Writing Scenario #3 – Writing Directions - Eli

Review with students the importance of the following items when writing directions for someone else:

- First, understand the activity or task you are describing.
- Always put yourself in the place of the reader (the one who has to use or follow your instructions).
- Visualize each step in your mind and what is needed to accomplish the task.
- Write in a clear and concise manner.
- Test the instructions to make sure that they really work.

#### Activity 1

Put different tasks on strips of paper. Examples: How to tie your shoes. How to make a jelly sandwich. How to change a light bulb. How to turn on the computer. How to measure the size of the room. Have the students draw a slip of paper and write directions for their “how to” task. When they are done, have each student share his or her directions with another student in the class. Have the student complete each step of the written directions. Discuss whether or not the student was able to complete the task based on the directions. Why or why not? Students may wish to ask questions such as:

- Are there steps missing?
- Are the directions easy to follow?
- How could these instructions be better?

Show students how to use a graphic organizer to develop their step-by-step instructions, such as the following:

#### Name of Task:

Step	Action
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

## **Writing Scenario #4 - Writing a Letter of Customer Appreciation – Toni**

### **Activity 1**

Have students read the story and the letter that Toni wrote. Have the students brainstorm the reasons Toni's boss was pleased with her writing. Examples may include: correct style for a business letter, correct grammar and spelling, typed rather than handwritten, made the reader feel important, etc. Write their reasons on the board or chart paper. Discuss what makes a good business letter and why it is important to the workplace.

### **Extended Activity**

Have students bring in samples of business letters that they receive (often called junk mail). Divide the students into teams. Give each team a sample business letter, a pair of scissors, and the following template. Have each team cut out the correct part of their business letter that matches each of the following parts of a business letter. Discuss possible reasons why some letters do not follow a formal business letter style. Reasons may include: poorly written, non-workplace audience, different styles used by different workplaces, writer doesn't know the correct format, etc.

### **Business Letter Format**

Letterhead

Date

Inside Address

Salutation

Body of the Letter

Closing

Writer's signature

Writer's name and title

## Preparing Workers' Reading Classroom Activities

### Reading Scenario #1 – Beatrice and Victor

Provide students with different reasons for a person not being able to go to work for the day.

Examples of reasons are:

- My alarm didn't go off.
- Traffic was bad.
- I'm sick in bed with the flu.
- I missed the bus.
- I have friends from out-of-town.
- I had a death in the family.
- My child is ill and has to stay home from school

Have the class role play telephoning the workplace with their reasons for not being at work. One student should act as the employer and the other the employee. Have the rest of the class listen to the telephone conversation. The class should critique the conversation and discuss those items that should be covered.

### Reading Scenario #2 – Jan

1. Ask students what they know about safety on the job. Write their responses on the board.
2. Target vocabulary words, e.g., caution, warning, danger, wet floor, fire extinguisher, rubber-soled shoes, poison, hair-net, etc.
3. Create pictures of safety signs used in the workplace. Discuss who uses specific items and where the signs are posted.
4. Play a Safety Picture Bingo game
  - a. Print Bingo board blanks for each player
  - b. Write the key safety words in the Bingo squares of each board
  - c. Cut out pictures of safety signs and write the corresponding key word or phrase on the back. These are the Bingo cards.
  - d. To play, give students markers, such as small squares of colored paper. Shuffle the bingo cards and turn them over one at a time. Players should identify the picture with the correct word or phrase. If the word or phrase appears on their Bingo board, they should place a marker on that square. The winner is the first person to complete a row.

Sample safety signs:



### Activity 2

Show students an example of an accident form. Discuss what information is needed to complete the form. Have them fill out a sample form.

### Reading Scenario #3 – Sally and Anna

On the board, draw two columns. Label one side “Going Up” and the other “Going Down.” Have the students brainstorm positive and negative workplace attitudes. Write the good attitudes or behaviors under “Going Up” and the negative ones under “Going Down.” Discuss how these attitudes are important to employers when promoting employees.

### Reading Scenario #4 - Tina

Review with students the rules of giving, receiving, and accepting criticism. Discuss the need for a positive attitude when changing a behavior. Students may wish to role play the scenario with Tina and her supervisor using the following steps.

Giving Criticism	Give criticism in private. Do not sound threatening. Focus on the problem, not on the person's personality. Don't use words such as "always," "never" or "worst." Give criticism soon after the event. Stick to one subject. Use “I” instead of “you.” Example: “I” know that you can do the job. Let the other person talk.
Receiving Criticism	Welcome feedback. Listen to what the person is saying Look at the person. Sit in a non-threatening manner. Repeat the criticism to make sure you understand it. View the criticism as a way to fix a problem, not a personal attack. Figure out possible solutions to each criticism.

## Preparing Workers' Mathematics Classroom Activities

### Math Scenario #1 – Budgeting a Paycheck – Edward

Begin the lesson by having students brainstorm reasons for having a monthly budget. Reasons may include: making sure that there is enough money to pay the bills, understanding where the money is going, deciding whether there is enough money in the budget to buy something, etc.

Have students help Edward budget his monthly expenses and figure out how much money he can put into his savings account by completing the Budget Worksheet. Students may work in pairs or small groups. Have the students use the following information to complete Edward's budget form.

- Edward's monthly income from Job #1 is: \$1,345 and from Job #2 is \$365.
- Edward has the following expenses:
  - Rent payment of \$575
  - Car payment of \$165
  - Car insurance of \$50
  - Food cost of \$125
  - Utilities of \$135
  - Car expenses of \$120
  - Personal expenses of \$55
  - Entertainment expenses of \$95

Edward's Completed Budget Worksheet

<b>Income</b>	
Job #1	\$1,345.00
Job #2	\$365.00
Other	\$0.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,710.00</b>
<b>Fixed Expenses</b>	
Rent	\$575.00
Car Insurance	\$50.00
Other	\$0.00
<b>Total Fixed Expenses</b>	<b>\$625.00</b>

<b>Installment Payments</b>	
Credit Card #1	\$25.00
Credit Card #2	
Car Loan Payment	\$165.00
<b>Total Installment Debt</b>	<b>\$190.00</b>
<b>Flexible Expenses</b>	
Food	\$125.00
Utilities (gas, electricity, water)	\$135.00
Car Expenses (gas, oil, tolls, repairs)	\$120.00
Clothing	\$0.00
Personal Items (toothpaste)	\$55.00
Medical	\$0.00
Household Items	\$0.00
Entertainment	\$95.00
<b>Total Flexible Expenses</b>	

Income – Expenses (Fixed Expenses + Installment Payments + Flexible Expenses) = Money Remaining

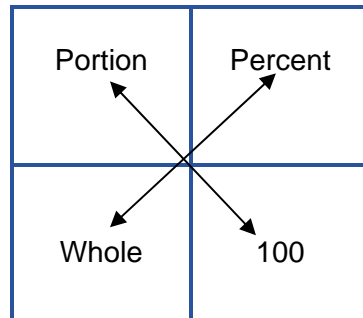
Have students develop their own personal budgets. Start by having students think about all of the different types of expenses they have. Discuss additional items that they may wish to add to their budgets that were not included in Edward's budget.

**Extended Activity:** Begin the activity by having students think about a “big ticket” item that they would like to purchase (such as a flat-screen television, iPod, vacation). Have them review their budgets to see how much money they could reasonably save each month. Next, have students estimate how long it would take them to save enough money to purchase their item. Have students estimate how long it would take them to save for the item if they could increase their savings by 10% each month, 20% each month, and by 50% each month.

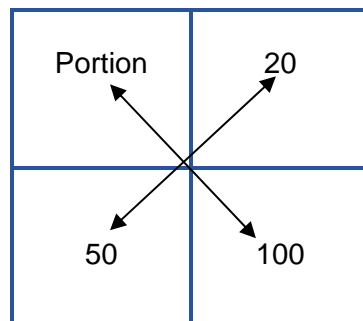
## Math Scenario #2 – Figuring Commission - Maria

Students may have difficulty in figuring percentages. Sometimes a graphic, such as the following chart, assists them in remembering where to put each of the numbers when figuring a percent problem.

All students have to do is place the information in the following grid and then cross multiply and divide. The grid helps them remember where to place the whole number, the portion, and the percent. Always have students put the number “100” in the lower, right-hand square.



Model for students how to use the grid. An example is:  
What is 20% of 50?



$$20 \times 50 = 1000$$

$$1000 \div 100 = 10$$

Therefore, 20% of 50 = 10

Using the grid provides students with a graphic organizer to use for percentage problems, as well as alleviating the problem of where to “place” the decimal.

Have students estimate the amount of commission that Maria will make from the following amounts. Students may wish to check their answers using the grid and then calculate the exact amount of commission Maria will make for each amount.

The estimated answers are:

- $\$3,238.98 = \$3,200 \times .05 = \$160.00$
- $\$2,198.76 = \$2,200 \times .05 = \$110.00$
- $\$1,548.98 = \$1,500 \times .05 = \$75.00$

Discuss with students whether or not Maria will see this amount in her paycheck or is there anything else that Maria has to worry about (taxes, etc.).

**Extended Activity:** Provide students with the following information. You may want to write the following amounts for each week on the board or on chart paper.

Maria's boss told her that she can expect a sharp increase in sales in November and December. In fact, records show that last year one of the sales clerks had the following sales for the five weeks beginning the week of Thanksgiving and ending on New Year's Eve. Estimate the sales clerk's commission for those weeks.

- Week 1 - \$5,245.62
- Week 2 - \$4,635.38
- Week 3 - \$4,269.76
- Week 4 - \$5,454.92
- Week 5 - \$5,512.71

Ask students why they think there was a larger increase during the first, fourth, and fifth weeks.

This is an excellent time to talk with students about how working in sales, especially on commission, can sometimes be challenging; whereas at other times it is very exciting and financially rewarding. Discuss with students why sales are higher at certain times of the year and lower at others.

**Answers:**

- Week 1 -  $\$5,245.62 = \$5,200 \times .05 = \$260.00$
- Week 2 -  $\$4,635.38 = \$4,600 \times .05 = \$230.00$
- Week 3 -  $\$4,269.76 = \$4,200 \times .05 = \$210.00$
- Week 4 -  $\$5,454.92 = \$5,400 \times .05 = \$270.00$
- Week 5 -  $\$5,512.71 = \$5,500 \times .05 = \$275.00$

### **Math Scenario #3 – The Computers Are Down! Counting Change – Miguel**

Have students share experiences that they have had with getting the incorrect change when purchasing an item. Ask the students how many times they've been given a handful of change or a wad of bills so that they were not even able to figure out if they had the correct amount before the cashier moved on to the next customer.

Discuss with students how most stores have cash registers that tell the cashier how much change to give the customer. However, sometimes cash registers are down or a customer changes the amount of money given after a sale has been rung up. Have students share with the class what they would do if they found themselves in Miguel's situation.

One of the more difficult but basic money skills is understanding how to make change, and knowing how much change you will receive when spending money and purchasing an item or items. Teach students how to make change by "counting up." To teach students how to "count up" when making change, you may wish to role play the following scenario.

A customer gives the cashier a \$100 bill for an \$89.50 purchase. The cashier places the bill on the cash register. It is important for a cashier not to put the bill into the cash drawer until after the sale is completed. Sometimes customers "forget" how much money they have given the cashier.

After taking the money from the customer, the cashier repeats the amount owed and "from one hundred" (or whatever denomination bill is proffered). For example: The cashier would say \$89.50 from \$100 and then count the change up to \$100 out loud as he/she lays the money into the customer's hand. \$89.50 plus 25 cents (add a quarter), makes \$89.75, plus 25 cents (add another quarter) makes \$90.00, plus \$10.00 (add a ten dollar bill) makes \$100.00.

When "counting up," always start with the smallest coin and then work up to larger denominations of money.

Divide the class into teams of cashiers and customers to practice the process of "counting up." Provide the teams with paper money and coins to use. Provide each team with different monetary amounts. The customer should provide the amount of the sale and their payment to the cashier. The cashier should then "count up" the change to the customer. Students may wish to check the accuracy of the change received by using a calculator.

Samples of "counting up" scenarios:

Scenario: You buy a notebook that costs \$0.78. You pay with a five-dollar bill. How much change will she get back?

Answer: \$5.00 for a note book that costs \$0.78. The change is \$4.22 – 2 pennies, 2 dimes, 4 dollars. When giving change back, the student should say, "\$0.78, 79, 80, 90, \$1.00, \$2.00, \$3.00, \$4.00, \$5.00."

Scenario: You buy a drink for \$1.67. You pay with two one-dollar bills.

Answer: \$2.00 for a drink that cost \$1.67. The change is \$0.33 – 3 pennies, 1 nickel, 2 quarters. When giving change back, the student should say, "\$1.67, \$1.68, \$1.69, \$1.70, \$1.75, \$2.00."

Scenario: You buy a book that costs \$8.59. You pay with a ten-dollar bill.

Answer: \$10.00 for a book that costs \$8.59. The change is \$1.41 – 1 penny, 1 dime, 1 nickel, 1 quarter, 1 dollar. When giving change back, the students should say, \$8.60, \$8.70, \$8.75, \$9.00, \$10.00.”

Discuss that adults may be making money transactions on a daily basis. Like telling time, reading a map, or using a calendar, the skill of counting money is an important one.

**Extended Activity:** Recognizing change should be automatic. If students have difficulty with making change, use the following templates for two concentration games. The first game helps students recognize the coins needed when making change by matching the dollar amount to the different coins.

\$ .18	4 dimes + 1 nickel	\$ .79	3 quarters + 1 dime + + 4 pennies
3 quarters + 4 pennies	\$.71	3 dimes + 1 nickel + 3 pennies	\$.55
\$.45	1 nickel + 1 penny	\$.38	2 quarters + 1 nickel
1 dime + 1 nickel + 3 pennies	\$.89	2 quarters + 2 dimes + 1 penny	\$.06

For this concentration game, the customer has given the clerk a \$5 bill. Match the amount of the bill with the correct amount of change. The amount of the bill is indicated in the grey blocks – the change in the white boxes.

\$1.72	\$3.97	\$4.47	\$.53
\$2.37	\$1.03	\$3.28	\$4.92
\$2.63	\$2.84	\$.65	\$.08
\$4.35	\$3.08	\$1.92	\$2.16

## **Math Scenario #4 – Payday Lenders: It’s Harder Than It Looks – Lukas**

Students may be unfamiliar with the term “payday lender.” However, most students have probably seen advertisements promising cash in advance or instant income tax refunds.

Provide students with basic information on payday loans. Discuss that these types of loans are generally small cash advances, usually of \$500 or less at a time. To get this type of a line, the borrower gives a payday lender a postdated personal check or an authorization for automatic withdrawal from the borrower’s bank account. In return, the borrower receives cash, minus the lender’s fees. For example, with a \$500 payday loan, a borrower might pay \$75 in fees and get \$425 in cash.

The borrower then has the option of paying back the money, allowing the lender to deposit the original check, or renewing the loan. If the borrower renews the loan, the borrower does not get any “new” money, but rather pays another fee amount. This means that the borrower gets further in debt by renewing the loan.

Have students brainstorm why payday lenders might be a necessary service to people. Answers could include that there are no alternatives for people to get the ready cash they need. Ask students what else Lukas could have done as an alternative to borrowing from a payday lender. Sample answers would be that Lukas could have: asked his company for an advance, obtained a second job, asked his landlord for additional time to pay his rent, asked a family member for a loan, spent less on extra items, etc.

It is important that students are able to identify the pros and cons of borrowing from a payday lender and the results that high interest rates and fees have on one’s budget.

## Situational Questions

### Acquire and Use Information

*Self Management: Display responsible behaviors at work (maintain appropriate grooming and hygiene).*

Simon has started a new job. He works at a local restaurant in the kitchen. The dress code requires that all workers wear hairnets. Simon thinks this is a silly rule. His hair is not that long. Simon really likes his new job. He just doesn't like the way he looks when he wears a hairnet. What should Simon do?

- a. Refuse to wear the hairnet because it looks "uncool."
- b. Talk to other restaurants about the rule.
- c. Wear the hairnet because it is the restaurant's rule.
- d. Complain to the customers about the rule.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is C. Hairnets are required in restaurants due to safety reasons. It is important to follow safety rules.

The worst answer is A. Refusing to wear the hairnet will likely result in Simon losing his job. Rules must be followed by everyone.

### Use Technology

*Be able to use a telephone, pager, radio, or other device to handle and process communication.*

Walter has just gotten a job as a security officer at an office building. As part of his job, Walter must check each office every three hours. Walter must also check in with his supervisor every three hours. The company has given Walter a phone and a list of codes for the security system. During his first evening on the job, Walter gets confused on how to use the security system. What should he do?

- a. Call the supervisor and ask for assistance on how to use the security system.
- b. Sit at the front door to ensure no one enters the building.
- c. Wait until tomorrow and talk with the supervisor about how to work the security system.
- d. Lock the front door and leave for the evening as there is nothing more that can be done.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is A. Technology can be difficult to learn. However, Walter needs to complete his job to the best of his ability. Calling for assistance is the responsible thing for Walter to do.

The worst answer is D. Even though the building is locked, Walter has been hired to guard the building for the evening. Leaving without telling anyone is termed a dereliction of duties.

## Use Systems

*Pay attention to company guidelines regarding appropriate dress.*

Hector is a teacher at a high school. While he is teaching, his son, Dale, calls him from school. Dale is very sick and needs to go home. Hector is a single parent and new to the area. He is in the middle of teaching a class. What should he do?

- a. Leave his class unsupervised and pick up his son to take him home.
- b. Tell the teacher in the next classroom to watch his students as he needs to go home.
- c. Contact the principal to request permission to leave school and to have another teacher monitor his classroom.
- d. Tell the principal to watch his class.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is C. In a job, one should request permission to leave early. Because Hector is also responsible for the supervision of students, he needs to ensure that his classroom is supervised by an adult.

The worst answer is A. Leaving a classroom unsupervised could result in a safety problem for the school. It is important that when leaving a job early, a supervisor is always contacted.

## Work with Others

You are called by the factory to come in on your day off. They ask if you can cover another shift as Damian has called in sick. You already have plans to go to the amusement park. You tell your workplace that you cannot come in. While waiting in line at the park, you see Damian ahead of you. What should you do?

- a. Do nothing because it is not your problem.
- b. Inform your boss the next day that Damien skipped work and that he is an awful worker who should be fired immediately.
- c. Talk to Damian about his irresponsible behavior and tell him that if this happens again, you will need to tell your supervisor.
- d. Tell Damian's friends that he skipped work.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is C. Making a co-worker aware that his actions are wrong and letting him explain his actions is the best answer to the question.

The worst answer is B. Telling on a fellow worker can result in others not wanting you as part of the team. It is always best to first talk with a person, before reporting to the boss.

## **Integrity**

*Maintain confidentiality, as appropriate, about matters encountered.*

Mandy works for a psychologist. She types the notes from the counseling sessions. As she is typing, Mandy notices that the client is a neighbor. Mandy reads the personal information. She is very shocked at what she is reading. What should she do?

- a. Talk to her neighbor about her problem.
- b. Type the notes and not say anything to anyone.
- c. Talk to the psychologist about what to do as this is her neighbor.
- d. Ask the psychologist to assign someone else to type the notes.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is B. Many jobs require confidentiality. This means that a worker should do his/her job and not share the information with others.

The worst answer is A. The neighbor expected complete confidentiality when going to the psychologist. Talking to the neighbor about a confidential record is unprofessional. This would be grounds for being fired.

## **Know How to Learn**

*Accept help from supervisors and coworkers*

Pauline just started working as a nursing assistant yesterday. This is her first full-time job. She wanted the job and wants to do well, but her supervisor, Ms. Bailey, scares her. Yesterday she told Pauline, "Don't make the beds like that." and then rushed off. Later, Ms. Bailey came back and said, "Here, fill in the chart." Pauline didn't know how. Pauline knows that Ms. Bailey wasn't happy with her work yesterday. Pauline is worried about talking with Ms. Bailey since she always seems so busy. Pauline is afraid that Ms. Bailey will think that she isn't a good worker if she asks questions. What should Pauline do?

- a. Ask Ms. Bailey if she can make an appointment to talk with her. Pauline should explain that she likes the job and wants to do well, but that Ms. Bailey is going too fast for her to understand all of the instructions.
- b. Watch how other employees complete the job.
- c. Explain her problem to a co-worker and ask what to do.
- d. Complain how unfair and incompetent Ms. Bailey is as a supervisor.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is A. Setting an appointment time will provide both Pauline and Ms. Bailey with time to discuss Pauline's concerns and Ms. Bailey's expectations. Pauline needs to know what her supervisor expects of her employees, rather than getting the information from others.

The worst answer is D. Complaining about your supervisor to others is unprofessional. This type of behavior is not productive to learning.

### **Responsibility**

*Show initiative in carrying out work assignments.*

Inez is a waitress at a local diner. She works the breakfast and lunch crowds. As she was leaving for a break before the lunch rush, she noticed a lot of tables hadn't been cleaned. What should Inez do?

- a. Nothing because cleaning tables is someone else's job.
- b. Report that someone has not been doing his/her job.
- c. Tell the supervisor that she is going to clean the tables before her break in order to be ready for the lunch crowd.
- d. Tell a fellow waitress to clean the tables.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is: C. A willingness to complete tasks that need to be done is necessary for success in the workplace. Sometimes one needs to help others in order for good customer service to be provided.

The worst answer is A. If the tables are not cleaned by lunch time, customers will not be served. Good teamwork requires that workers communicate and help each other.

### **Allocate Resources**

*Manage time effectively to get work done on schedule; make sure that urgent tasks are completed on time; make sure that materials, tools, and equipment are available to do the job effectively.*

Fran works in a hotel. She must clean ten rooms each day. Fran finds it very hard to clean that many rooms. She is not as fast as other workers. She is often late getting off work. What should Fran do?

- a. Ask her supervisor to give her fewer rooms to clean.
- b. Clean only the number of rooms that she can finish during her shift. The rest of the rooms can be left dirty until the next day.
- c. Ask fellow workers if she can observe on her own time what they do when cleaning the rooms so that she can learn how to become better.
- d. Ask her supervisor for a transfer to a different department.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is C. It can be helpful to watch how others successfully complete their job. You can learn different ways of doing things better.

The worst answer is B. Leaving rooms dirty until the next day could result in Fran being fired for not doing her job.

## **Solve Problems**

*Identify actual or potential problems related to one's work and help to fix them.*

You and a co-worker are working on a big project. It demands a great deal of effort from both of you. Your co-worker is often absent. She has many personal problems. Although she has been a good worker in the past, she is doing very little on the project. You really don't know her well, so you are putting in lots of hours to try and get the project done. You have some health problems from lack of sleep. You are worried that you will get sicker and not meet the deadline. What should you do?

- a. Ask other workers to help you with the project.
- b. Talk with your supervisor and ask for additional help so that the project will be done on time.
- c. Help your co-worker with her personal problems.
- d. Continue to work long hours and hope you don't get sicker.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is B. Sometimes projects require more help. Unless you speak with your supervisor about the problem, nothing will be done.

The worst answer is C. Trying to help your co-worker with her personal problems may result in your not being able to work on the project.

## **Solve Problems**

*Cope with a work situation or tasks that change frequently.*

Juan works in a hardware store on weekends. The store has a large inventory. Each week there are new things on the shelves. The shelves look different each time Juan comes to work. When a customer comes into the store and ask for an item, Juan can't find the item. He asks his boss where the item is. His boss is upset with him. He wants Juan to use his common sense and find things for customers. Juan needs the part-time job. He likes working in the store. What should he do?

- a. Tell customers he doesn't know where items are located. This way he won't bother his boss so much and his boss will not become upset.
- b. Ask other employees where items are located.
- c. Spend more time in the storage area and less time in the store so that he won't have to answer as many questions.
- d. Come in to work early to walk through the store and jot down the changes that have been made so he knows where the different items are located when customers ask a question.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is D. If a work situation changes, an employee needs to spend time reviewing and understanding the changes. Things do not stay the same. It is the employee's responsibility to cope with the changes.

The worst answer is A. Juan's job is to serve customers. Ignoring the problem will not help him keep his job.

### **Self Management**

*Display responsible behaviors at work: Avoid absenteeism.*

Marie is a nurse at a local hospital. She wants to go to a friend's party on Wednesday. The nursing supervisor has scheduled Marie to work on Wednesday. Marie goes to her supervisor to ask for the day off. The supervisor says it's impossible because Marie has not given her any notice. The supervisor says Marie must work on Wednesday or be fired. What should Marie do?

- a. Work her shift and make sure that she requests time off earlier the next time.
- b. Not call or show up to work, so that she can attend her friend's party.
- c. Work her shift, but complain to fellow workers about not going to the party.
- d. Get a friend to trade with her and let the supervisor know that she is changing her personal schedule.

The best answer is:

The worst answer is:

The best answer is A. Supervisors work hard at creating schedules. When an employee needs time off, the sooner it is requested, generally the better.

The worst answer is B. Not calling in or not showing up at work are grounds for firing. Supervisors expect people to work their shifts and to communicate any requests for changes.