

SCHOLASTIC Teacher

Incorporating **Instructor.**



Help your students become socially-savvy through lessons on attitude, boundaries, and more.

Lessons and Activities:

ATTITUDE LATITUDES

What You Need: [Three worksheets: Introvert or Extrovert, Optimist or Pessimist, X-Y graph](#)

What to Do: Ask students what it means to have an attitude. Though they'll likely think it's a matter of having a good or a bad attitude, define attitude as one's "readiness to act or react in a certain way."

Have students describe how they act or react in different situations. Does their attitude change from situation to situation? Hand out the [Introvert or Extrovert](#) and [Optimist or Pessimist](#) worksheets for students to find out how they rank. Then, have them figure out their "attitude latitudes" on the third worksheet (an [X-Y graph](#)). Students will graph their introversion/extroversion score on the horizontal axis and their optimism/pessimism score on the vertical axis to land in one of four quadrants. You might use fictional characters from a book or movie to symbolize each quadrant. (I've used characters from *Shrek*. You're a "Donkey," for instance, if you're an extroverted optimist.) This will give students some insight into how they relate to other people and how they might harness their energies in the most socially beneficial way.

BRAIN FREEZERS

What You Need: [Worksheet and answer key](#)

What to Do: How often do your students think about their own thinking? Distribute the [Brain Freezers worksheet](#). Have students work individually or in small groups to answer all of the riddles as quickly as possible. (You might set a time limit, such as 10 or 15 minutes.) When students are done, ask them which riddles were difficult and which were easy. (They will likely say that riddles in the first column were easier.) Invite students to share their answers. As they do so, write the most common responses on the board. After reviewing the answers and explanations using the [supplied answer key](#), ask students if they have changed their minds about which riddles were easy. Elicit that the riddles in the first column seemed easy, but actually should have made them stop and think. Their wrong answers were the result of "fast thinking." Conversely, the riddles in the second column seemed to require a lot of thought, when the solutions were actually simple; "slow thinking" likely bogged them down.

Use this activity as an opportunity to talk about times that "fast thinking" or "slow thinking" got them in trouble: "Fast thinking" can cause you to jump to conclusions, while "slow thinking" can make you dwell too much on problems.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

What You Need: [Boundaries worksheet](#)

What to Do: To most students, boundaries are the lines drawn between states or nations. Explain that boundaries also pertain to relationships—rules that tell us what we can and can't do. Talk about the boundaries that apply in families, school, and society. Next, hand out the [Boundaries worksheet](#) and talk about the types of rules—rigid (hard-and-fast), clear (firm but appropriate), and fuzzy (inconsistent or nonexistent). Have students work in small groups to evaluate the boundaries listed on the worksheet to determine the type of boundary described in each. Review the answers as a class and discuss what life would be like without boundaries. Are they frustrating but important to have? Work with students to create a list of classroom boundaries, organized by physical (respect one another's space), behavioral (listen respectfully), and academic (turn in work on time).

WHAT SETS YOU OFF?

What You Need: [What Sets You Off? worksheet](#)

What to Do: Managing emotional responses is difficult for many adolescents, who are still developing neurologically—the emotional centers of the brain develop more rapidly than the executive centers.

Hand out the [What Sets You Off?](#) worksheet. Have students recall a time when they got really angry and then write down “just the facts” about the incident. Students should detail three different experiences on the worksheet. Then, challenge them to look for patterns as to what sets them off. Have they gotten angry at least twice over the same situation or with the same person? This can reveal that certain people or behaviors (e.g., teasing) act as triggers for them. Likewise, it will help identify “danger zones” for confrontations (the locker room, for instance). When you debrief students’ experiences, focus on the suggestion “Don’t react! Respond.” Discuss the difference (reaction is knee-jerk, while response is something you do after careful thought) and how a response might have de-escalated an encounter.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

What You Need: [Two worksheets: What's Their Attitude? Part I and Part II](#)

What to Do: Introduce students to four communication styles: assertive (standing up for yourself and respecting others), passive (doing anything to avoid conflict), aggressive (standing up for yourself and not caring who gets hurt), and passive-aggressive (secretly angry). Give examples of these styles using characters from a book you’ve recently read in class.

Hand out the first worksheet, [What's Their Attitude? Part I](#), to learn how these different styles play out in conflicts. Then, create a fictional disagreement, inviting student volunteers to role-play it. Dissect the conflict by identifying who was involved, what each person wanted, how the individuals communicated what they wanted, and if it was resolved, including who “won.” Talk about the different communication styles each actor exhibited.

To wrap up, have students complete the questions at the bottom of the worksheet and on the second worksheet ([What's Their Attitude? Part II](#)) to anticipate how they might best act during a conflict. Refer back to these win-win solutions the next time a disagreement occurs in class.

Adapted from *Social & Emotional Learning: Essential Lessons for Student Success*.

VISIT: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/grades-6-8-social-emotional-skills/>

