

**Overview**

Practicing being assertive can help students express themselves respectfully. It also prepares them to take a stand against bullying, substance abuse, and other risky behaviors.

Students can learn to be more assertive by practicing appropriate body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and choice of words.

**Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Distinguish differences between passive, assertive, and aggressive communication styles
- Identify and assume the physical and verbal characteristics of assertive communication
- Apply assertive communication skills

**Lesson at a Glance****Part 1**

**Partner activity:** Identifying communication styles using cartoon situations.

**Class discussion:** Understanding the characteristics of passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles.

**Group activity:** Communication Styles Challenge. Identifying characteristics of passive, aggressive, or assertive communication using video vignettes.

**Part 2**

**Video:** Demonstration of the Assertive Communication skill practice.

**Skill practice:** Assertive Communication.

**Class discussion:** Benefits of assertive communication.

**Supplies and Equipment**

- DVD player and monitor or computer with projector and screen
- Note cards, three per group
- Clipboard and Observational Assessment Form if doing the observational assessment

**Lesson Materials**

- Grade 6 DVD, Lesson 5 segment
- Handout 5A: Communication Styles, page 213
- Handout 5B: Chart of Communication Styles, page 215
- Handout 5C: Assertive Communication Skill-Practice Instructions, page 217
- Assertive Communication Skill-Practice Scenarios, page 219
- Optional: “What’s Your Style?” homework, page 221

**Lesson Preparation**

- Copy Handout 5A: Communication Styles (page 213), one per pair of students.
- Copy Handout 5B: Chart of Communication Styles (page 215), one per student.
- Copy Handout 5C: Assertive Communication Skill-Practice Instructions (page 217), one per student.
- Make three signs on 8½" x 11" paper for the Communication Styles Challenge. Write “passive” on the first, “aggressive” on the second, and “assertive” on the third. Post them on the wall, five to six feet apart, at the front of the classroom.
- Preview the Communication Styles Challenge on pages 206–207 and video clips on screen 5.5 on the DVD.
- Copy and cut apart the Assertive Communication Skill-Practice Scenarios (page 219), one set per group.
- Prepare a personal example of how being assertive, rather than passive or aggressive, helps you communicate with other teachers or administrators.
- Optional: Copy the “What’s Your Style?” homework (page 221), one per student.

### Teaching Notes

**Assertive vs. aggressive:** In this lesson, students learn the effective and respectful communication style expected *within* the school setting. Some students may challenge the idea that being assertive, as opposed to aggressive, is the most effective way to have their needs met *outside* of school. You can remind them that the goal of this program is to teach them skills that help them be successful in school now and in the workplace in the future.

**Eye contact:** Looking into another person's eyes is considered a sign of disrespect in some cultures. This lesson directs students to look at someone, but this does not necessarily mean making eye contact. If you think there may be students for whom eye contact is disrespectful, these students can focus on other components of assertive communication such as tone, clarity of voice, word choice, and posture. This lesson offers a good opportunity to discuss cultural differences with students.

### Using Lesson Content Every Day

Transition times provide a good opportunity to model assertive communication skills and behaviors. Using an attention signal along with clear, firm verbal instructions will convey your need for students' attention.

Use the terms "assertive," "passive," and "aggressive" when commenting on behaviors during group work. Describe and reinforce effective assertive communication when you notice it. For example, "I noticed how Anton asked everyone to get back to work on the handout in a clear, calm way. He was using assertive communication and it really got everyone's attention in a positive way."

Take time to individually coach students who are overly passive or aggressive in groups. Suggest comments they can use, such as "Let's hear from everyone. What do you think, Tianna?" or "Those are good ideas, Tran" or "Let's make sure we have time to hear from everyone."

Demonstrate how students can communicate assertively with their teachers when seeking help or clarification with assignments. Let them know the best way to get your attention.

### Why This Lesson Is Important

It is important for students to learn the differences between assertive, aggressive, and passive ways to communicate. Much of the violence that plagues schools begins with aggressive interactions that escalate. Aggressive communication causes problems with other students, school staff, and adults in the community. Students can reduce their involvement in aggression and violence by using assertive communication skills to stand up for themselves and get their point across without disrespecting others.

Learning to be assertive also has value for students being bullied, sexually harassed, or otherwise mistreated by peers. Assertiveness can be a tool for standing up for their rights.

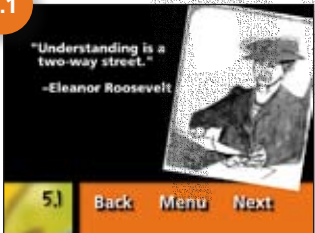
Because the middle grades are a time of intense pressure to go along with peers, students can also apply assertiveness skills to refuse to take part in unsafe behavior, including alcohol and other drug abuse. Finally, young adolescents interact with a wide range of adults and need to learn to be assertive to get help in school and communicate respectfully in a variety of situations.



Total Time **25 minutes**

**You will need:**

- Grade 6 DVD, Lesson 5 segment
- Handout 5A: Communication Styles (page 213), one per pair of students
- A personal example of a time when being assertive helped you communicate
- Handout 5B: Chart of Communication Styles (page 215), one per student
- Note cards, three per group
- Game signs: "Passive," "Assertive," and "Aggressive" posted on the wall, five to six feet apart, at the front of the classroom

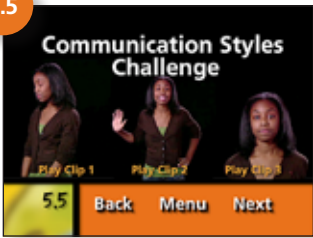
Outline	Script and Instructions
<p>Select Lesson 5 menu, then select "Begin."</p> <div data-bbox="212 709 269 751">5.1</div>  <p>Review empathy and perspectives.</p> <p>Introduce the lesson topic.</p>	<p>Before class starts, display the introductory screen.</p> <div data-bbox="1419 688 1523 720">5 minutes</div> <p><b>We've been learning about the importance of trying to understand or consider other people's perspectives.</b></p> <p>Review the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering perspectives is part of empathy.</li> <li>• When we make assumptions, we believe we <i>know</i> what someone is thinking or why someone is acting the way they are.</li> <li>• Always consider possibilities for what others may be thinking or reasons for their actions.</li> <li>• Get more information if you can.</li> </ul> <p><b>For the same reasons it's important to try to understand someone else's perspective, it's equally important to be able to clearly communicate your own perspective to be understood.</b></p> <p>The understanding has to go both ways, just like this quote says.</p> <p>Last time, we learned how to communicate our perspectives respectfully in a disagreement.</p> <p>Today we're going to explore how to state your perspective effectively in other types of situations when you need to stand up for what is right or tell someone what you believe, need, or want.</p> <p>To do this effectively and respectfully, you will need to recognize different styles of communication.</p>

Outline	Script and Instructions
<div data-bbox="121 304 170 346">5.2</div> <div data-bbox="142 319 451 552"> <p><b>Partner Activity</b> Which communication style fits each cartoon?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passive</li> <li>• Aggressive</li> <li>• Assertive</li> </ul> <p>5.2 Back Menu Next</p> </div> <p>Introduce and give instructions for the partner activity.</p> <p><b>Handout 5A:</b> <b>Communication Styles</b></p> <p>Have students do the partner activity.</p> <p>Call on a few students at random to report their answers.</p>	<div data-bbox="1323 279 1427 304">5 minutes</div> <p>To get started, you will do a quick partner activity.</p> <div data-bbox="548 380 652 514"> </div> <p>Distribute Handout 5A and go over the instructions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Look at the way the mouse is communicating to get his cheese back in each cartoon.</li> <li>2. Choose a communication style from the list that best describes the way the mouse is communicating.</li> <li>3. Write your choice on the line below each cartoon.</li> </ol> <p><b>You will have one minute.</b></p> <p>Give students one minute to do the partner activity.</p> <p>For each cartoon, call on one student to report which communication style he or she had written down. Ask if others agree.</p> <p><b>In which cartoon do you predict the mouse is most likely to get what it wants? Why?</b> (Cartoon 2. The assertive mouse is being reasonable. He is being clear. He is being respectful. Since the mouse can actually hear and understand what the other mouse wants and does not feel threatened, he returns the lost cheese.)</p> <p><b>In cartoon 1, where the mouse is being aggressive, what was the effect on the other mouse?</b> (He was scared. He ran away.)</p> <p><b>Last time we watched video scenes in which siblings who had a difference of opinion communicated with each other. Did you see them use any of these styles of communication?</b> (Aggressive in Part 1, assertive in Part 2.)</p> <p><b>Which style worked best to help them get along or get the chores done?</b> (Being assertive.)</p>



Outline	Script and Instructions
<div data-bbox="211 304 259 346">5.3</div> <div data-bbox="235 315 548 550">  </div> <p data-bbox="235 588 438 651">Discuss assertive communication.</p> <p data-bbox="235 1186 552 1312">Identify characteristics of passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles.</p> <p data-bbox="235 1344 511 1407"><b>Handout 5B: Chart of Communication Styles</b></p>	<div data-bbox="1421 283 1518 304">5 minutes</div> <p data-bbox="641 315 1412 409"><b>An assertive communication style will enable you to stand up for yourself. It lets people know what you want and need while still being respectful of others.</b></p> <p data-bbox="641 441 1461 598"><b>Why should we care about respecting others when we are trying to communicate our perspectives?</b> (It's the right/kind/ethical thing to do. If others feel respected, they will be more likely to help us. If others feel respected, they are more likely to listen to and consider our perspectives.)</p> <p data-bbox="641 630 1453 724"><b>Each of you learns every day which kinds of behavior and communication skills help you work things out within your own families and in your own neighborhoods.</b></p> <p data-bbox="641 756 1485 945"><b>Assertiveness helps you be successful here in school. It also helps you be successful outside of school and later in your life when you have a job.</b> If you have students who feel that assertive communication is not the best way to communicate in their homes or neighborhoods, you might lead a discussion about the merits of different types of communication in and out of school.</p> <p data-bbox="641 976 1485 1113">Give a personal example of how being assertive, rather than passive or aggressive, helps you communicate with other teachers or administrators. For example, describe a time when you were asked to take on too many tasks and had to say "no" to someone.</p> <p data-bbox="641 1176 1469 1270"><b>To be able to communicate assertively, it's important to know the differences between passive and assertive or between assertive and aggressive communication.</b></p> <p data-bbox="641 1302 1453 1459"><b>Just like you've done before when using your empathy skills to try to understand someone else's perspective, you need to pay careful attention to your own and others' body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and choice of words when you are trying to communicate assertively.</b></p> <div data-bbox="641 1501 747 1638">  </div> <p data-bbox="771 1501 1469 1659"><b>Let's look at a chart that describes the characteristics of the three communication styles.</b> Distribute Handout 5B. Go through the chart and have students read and demonstrate each style to each other. Clarify the meaning of "Words that give the message..." if necessary.</p> <p data-bbox="641 1690 1323 1753">Have a student volunteer read the characteristics of passive communication.</p> <p data-bbox="641 1785 1485 1848"><b>Now turn to your partner and together say, "I am not important" with a passive tone of voice, facial expression, and body language.</b></p>

Outline	Script and Instructions
	<p>Have a student volunteer read the characteristics of aggressive communication.</p> <p><b>Now turn to your partner and together say, “You are not important” with an aggressive tone of voice, facial expression, and body language.</b></p> <p>Have a student volunteer read the characteristics of assertive communication.</p> <p><b>Now turn to your partner and together say, “We are both important” with an assertive tone of voice, facial expression, and body language.</b></p>
<div data-bbox="115 779 168 835">5.4</div> <div data-bbox="142 808 453 1039"> <p><b>Communication Styles Challenge</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Watch the video and look for clues.</li> <li>2. Decide on the communication style.</li> <li>3. Clue-writer writes clues on the card.</li> <li>4. One person stands by the sign.</li> </ol> <p>5.4 Back Menu Next</p> </div> <p>Introduce the group activity.</p> <p>Note cards</p>	<div data-bbox="1320 766 1430 798">5 minutes</div> <p><b>Now let’s do a Communications Styles Challenge activity. In your groups, you will see how well you can identify the characteristics that make communication passive, aggressive, or assertive.</b></p> <p>Give each group three note cards and have the students identify a clue-writer for their group.</p> <p><b>You will watch three video clips that show characters demonstrating passive, aggressive, or assertive communication. During each clip, your group will look for clues in body language, facial expression, tone of voice, and word choice that tell you what style of communication is being demonstrated. Decide as a group what communication style is being shown.</b></p> <p><b>After each video clip you will have 30 seconds to write down as many clues to the communication style being shown as your group can think of. For example, if you noticed that a character is shouting, you would write that down as a clue for aggressive communication. You may use your chart to help you.</b></p> <p><b>After 30 seconds, I will call for one member of your group to bring me your clue card and then stand under the sign that your group agreed was the communication style shown in the video. Point out the three signs on the wall at the front of the room.</b></p>

Outline	Script and Instructions
<p>5.5</p>  <p>Have students do the challenge.</p> <p>Debrief students about the challenge.</p>	<p>5 minutes</p> <p>Play the video clips. After each clip, give students 30 seconds to decide which style of communication is being demonstrated and to write down clues. Have one student from each group come up to the front, give you the note card, and stand under the sign chosen.</p> <p>Read aloud some of the clues from the cards after each clip to reinforce the differences and to give the students positive feedback on their detective skills. Note where the students are standing and comment on how well they are able to identify the styles.</p> <p>Note: Clip 1 is “passive,” Clip 2 is “aggressive,” and Clip 3 is “assertive.”</p> <p><b>Knowing the differences between passive, aggressive, and assertive communication will help you when you attempt to communicate assertively.</b></p> <p><b>Paying attention to your own body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and choice of words are all important when communicating assertively.</b></p> <p><b>Which style of communication do you see students at this school using most?</b></p> <p><b>How does this affect the atmosphere here at school?</b></p> <p><b>What do you think students at this school need to work on to communicate assertively: body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, or choice of words?</b></p>
<p>End Part 1. Conclude here, or continue on to Part 2.</p>	<p><b>Today we explored communication styles.</b></p> <p>Review the main points of the lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We learned the characteristics of passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles.</li> <li>• We practiced identifying passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles.</li> <li>• We discussed how assertive communication helps you be successful in school and later in your life.</li> </ul> <p><b>Next time we will practice communicating assertively.</b></p>



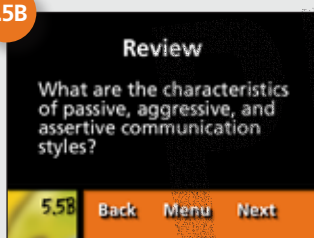


Total Time **25 minutes****You will need:**

- Grade 6 DVD, Lesson 5 segment
- Handout 5C: Assertive Communication Skill-Practice Instructions (page 217), one per student
- Assertive Communication Skill-Practice Scenarios (page 219), one set per group
- Optional: "What's Your Style?" homework (page 221), one per student

**Outline**

If presenting the lesson in two parts, select the Lesson 5 menu on the Grade 6 DVD, then select "Part 2."

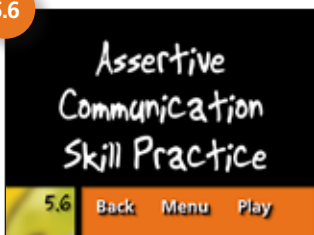
**5.5B**

Recap Part 1 of this lesson.

**Script and Instructions****Last time we explored communication styles.**

Review the main points of the lesson:

- We learned the characteristics of passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles.
- We practiced identifying passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles.
- We discussed how assertive communication helps you be successful in school and later in your life.

**Now we will practice communicating assertively.****5.6**

Introduce the skill practice and video demonstration.

**Handout 5C: Assertive Communication Skill-Practice Instructions**

**6 minutes**

**Responding assertively to a situation is a skill that, like any skill, improves with practice.**

**Now we are going to practice how to respond to a variety of situations in an assertive way.**






Distribute Handout 5C.

**Look at the checklist on Handout 5C. Here are the specific things you will practice.** Read through the list with the whole class.

**In a few minutes, everyone will work with their groups to practice. First let's watch some students showing how the skill practice works.**

**As you watch, notice how the students are working with a partner. Two are practicing, and two are coaching.**

Outline	Script and Instructions
<p>Have students watch the video demonstration.</p> <p>Video length: 2:40 minutes</p>	<p>Play the video.</p>
<p><b>5.7</b></p>  <p>Give the skill-practice instructions.</p> <p><b>Assertive Communication Skill-Practice Scenarios</b></p> <p>Have students do the skill practice.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>18 minutes</b></p> <p><b>Now it is your turn to practice with your group.</b></p> <p>Read skill-practice instructions from Handout 5C.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Decide which set of partners will practice first and which will be the coaches.</b></li> <li><b>2. One practice partner reads the situation, the others listen carefully.</b></li> <li><b>3. The coaches suggest assertive responses to the situation.</b></li> <li><b>4. The student who is practicing chooses one of these responses or uses one of his/her own.</b></li> <li><b>5. Coaches give encouraging feedback and fill in the checklist.</b></li> </ol> <p>Then the second practice partner takes a turn. Then everyone switches, and the practice partners become the coaches for the other two students.</p> <p>Some people may feel uncomfortable or even a little awkward practicing this skill. But that is just how it sometimes feels when you need to respond assertively in real life. For example, it can feel really uncomfortable or awkward to tell a friend that you don't want to go along with what he or she is doing. It's rarely easy. We only get better at it with practice.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Distribute the skill-practice scenarios.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 20px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Give the students five to seven minutes to do the skill practice. After two or three minutes, remind the students to switch parts. Observe and coach as necessary.</p> </div> </div>

Outline	Script and Instructions
<p>Ask for volunteers, as time allows, to demonstrate the skill practice for the class.</p>	<p>Ask for volunteers, as time allows, to demonstrate the skill practice for the class.</p>
<p>Debrief the students after each demonstration with these questions.</p>	<p><b>What was done particularly well in this skill practice?</b></p> <p><b>What characteristics of assertive communication did you see?</b></p> <p><b>Where could this student improve?</b></p>
<p>Discuss the benefits of assertive communication.</p>	<p><b>How might assertive communication help you get what you need or want?</b> (Respectful language, being confident, and being able to state clearly what you want can help others listen to and understand your perspective. When people feel respected, they are more likely to be open to helping or cooperating.)</p> <p><b>Why would communicating passively not be in your best interest in most situations?</b> (You might feel like someone has taken advantage of you. You won't feel in control of a situation. You might agree to something you don't want to do or don't believe is right. Others might assume you agree with them when you don't.)</p> <p><b>Why would communicating aggressively not be in your best interest in most situations?</b> (You could end up in a fight. You could get hurt. You could get in trouble. You could make someone angry. You could make someone defensive.)</p> <p><b>What can make it difficult to respond assertively?</b> (You might feel embarrassed, shy, uncomfortable, scared, afraid you'll seem uncool, afraid for your safety.)</p> <p><b>What can you do about those things?</b> (Practice responding assertively in safe situations with people you trust and feel safe around, such as family or friends. Plan or think about what you might do or say in advance. Think about what can happen if you don't respond assertively.)</p>