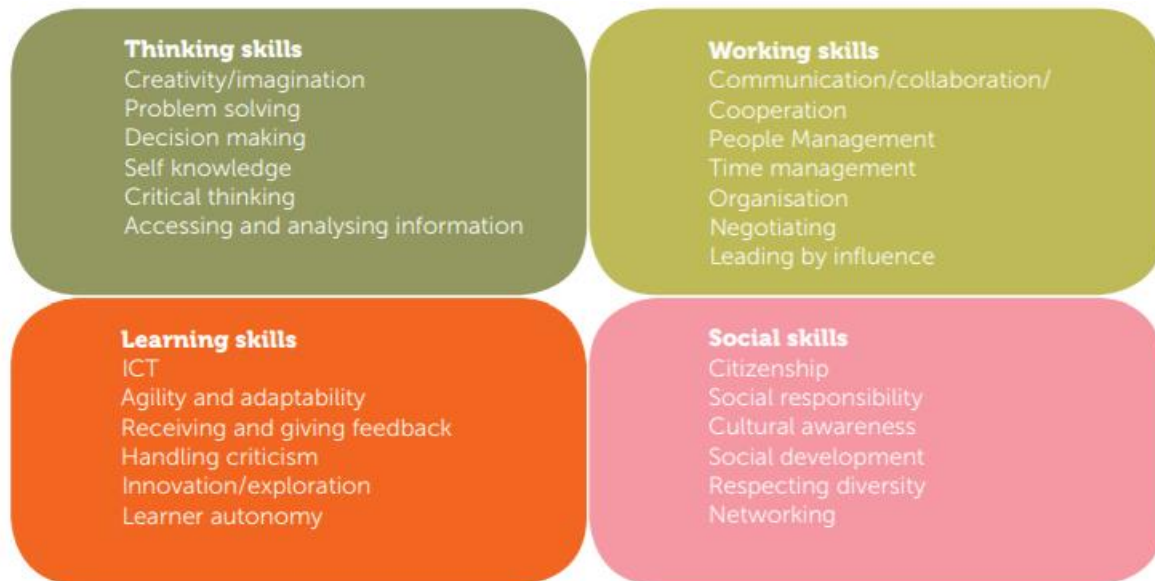


## So what are life skills?

A definitive list is something educators, governments and employers continue to discuss. But no matter if you call them life skills, 21st century skills, soft skills, etc. students who are able to understand and use these skills, along with their educational qualifications, will be better placed to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities.

„Dr. Spencer Kagan is an internationally acclaimed researcher, presenter and author of over 100 books,



**Listening skills** Good listening skills are invaluable to forming rapport with others... However, skilful listening is about more than 'hearing words'. It involves understanding the message, the situation and other people. There is an art in being able to discover what another person is trying to communicate, and this can take many years to perfect. Think of a recent situation when you felt that you were trying to communicate your point of view and could not make yourself heard.

- What was the situation: what happened?
- How did you feel?
- What did you do?
- What could the 'listener' or 'listeners' have done differently to help you feel you had been listened to?

(Taken from Palgrave, Skills for Success 3rd edition, by Stella Cottrell p. 135)



## RESPECTING OTHERS/ COMMUNICATION

class discussion



Plato was an expert in debate, it was central to his character. Still today, school and the working world present students with different ways in which they are asked to share their opinion. Employee engagement is seen as important in many places from supermarkets and fast-food retailers to .com businesses and health-care providers.

**Aim:** To help students understand the process involved in a successful debate/discussion

**Materials:** paper & pen/whiteboard.

Select one of the following topics (that doesn't have a single 'correct' answer) for students to debate

Which makes a better pet – a cat or a dog?

Which season of the year is the best?

What is better – health or wealth?

Which helps society more a doctor or a teacher?

(From the poster) Who is the most important of these 4 people?

Ask students to think of supporting reasons for their view. Students should work in groups to prepare their reasons for their choice. If possible set this as a homework task so that students have time to research their arguments on the Internet.

They should also think about what questions a moderator (who should not take either side) might ask.

**Explain how a debate is conducted:**

1. The moderator will pose the questions
2. Only one person should be speaking at a time – but that doesn't mean the other speaker cannot interrupt (see below)
3. If the discussion stalls and no one is speaking, the moderator should ask a question related to the subject, to get the groups talking again.
4. Set a time limit for any one speaker (60-90 seconds works well for lower-level students).
5. Encourage polite interruptions – 'I'm sorry to interrupt, but I want to say/add' 'Before you carry on, can I ...' 'Excuse me, but...'

**What are the key life skills students will cover in this session?**

● Active listening - When responding to a point made by Speaker A, students should show that they have been listening by summarising Speaker A's point before presenting reasons why they have a different point of view. Their own facts should give a weakness/alternative to Speaker A's point-of-view.

● Speakers should use powerful words to communicate their point of view, 'Research shows...' is much stronger than 'I think...', and numerical data or opinion poll results are a convincing support to arguments.

● Use facts rather than emotions (dogs may be cute but that's a subjective view)

● As moderator, include everyone in the discussion – so if Speaker A answered the first question, ask the second one to Speaker B. If there are more than two Speakers, make sure to invite all the speakers to comment so that everyone has a chance to contribute

● As the discussion nears its end, the moderator should allow each side/speaker to sum up the major points in support of their view. This should be no more than 2 or 3 sentences and should not be interrupted by the other speaker(s).

● Agree to disagree – once all the speakers have summed up, the moderator should thank all participants without expressing their opinion.

Have students change roles so that they take both sides of an argument and play the moderator's role. Which was the most difficult? Why?



# COMMUNICATION

## Much more than the words we speak



Shakespeare may not have had a computer or tablet, but he communicated so much through a variety of plays, sonnets and speeches. He needed to think not just about the words, but about how those words were delivered. In Shakespeare's time only men were actors; body language, tone of voice and 'presence' were as important then as they are today.

**Aim:** to equip students with interview skills

**Materials:** copy of the body language table per pair/group

In EFL classes students and teachers are very keen that good communication skills are developed and we work hard at pronunciation, stress, sentence construction etc. but some surveys suggest only 7% of what we communicate is through actual words. With online conferencing our body language is even more important than it may have been in the past, and for day-to-day life it's essential we know how to make the most of our communicative skills.

**Body Language:** Ask your students to try and put as many ideas into the table for each section as they can.

Now ask students to rework the ideas in each section into what they think is more positive body language. For example: keep your arms open/ by your side; nod your head/acknowledge what the speaker is saying; lean in to the speaker; copy the posture of the speaker to show empathy (sometimes called postural echo); extend your hand and give a firm handshake and look the person in the eye/maintain good eye contact (if culturally acceptable), etc.

Ideally, have students practise a short interview dialogue (from your coursebook) or a dialogue from a well-known book or play. A great place for ideas is [www.macmillanreaders.com](http://www.macmillanreaders.com)

Have the students read the text while mirroring one type of body language from above. Could the other students recognise the body language?

Someone comes across as aggressive if they...

Possible answers could include:

Stand with hands on hips  
Stand with feet apart (as if about to punch)  
Stand too close - Invading personal space  
Point fingers and gesture  
Fold their arms over their chest  
Avoid shaking hands  
Stare (in a fixed manner)

Someone comes across as defensive if they...

Possible answers could include:

Hunch their shoulders  
Make no or limited eye contact  
Show limited acknowledgement/agreement  
Lean away  
Hold their head to one side

Someone comes across as nervous if they...

Possible answers could include:

Avoid eye contact  
Bite their nails/chewing their lip  
Move restlessly from one foot to another  
Blush and/or sweat  
Don't shake hands or give a quick limp handshake  
smile/laugh (inappropriately)

Someone comes across as bored if they...

Possible answers could include:

Look around the room rather than at the speaker  
Look at their watch repeatedly  
Yawn/rub their face  
Shuffle in their seat/stretch their back or shoulders (if standing)  
Let their eyes 'glaze over'

Once the interview is progressing, your students may well have to make a PowerPoint presentation. If you have made a good impression, come across well and have your audience's attention, how do you communicate the key points so they will remember them?

Three main techniques for students to use, that many great communicators have adopted, are:

**1.** Pause just before you deliver a key point. For example, 'In conclusion, the skills that make me right for this job are...(pause)... then list the points.

**2.** Repeat the key phrase. For example, 'The team I led last year were the most productive they had been in four years... most productive in four years'

**3.** Strengthen your voice to stress a point. Practice this technique with your students as it can often become more of a shout or a high pitched squeak, but when done well, especially in a presentation, it can be very powerful. For example, 'I found that job challenging **but** overcame the administrative hurdles by...'



# KNOW YOURSELF

## understanding how your reactions influence others



Maya Angelou wrote about and experienced many emotions but as a poet tried to see how her actions influenced others with the aim of making the world a better place. Do we understand how what we think, feel and do can influence others?

**Aim:** To teach students that understanding how we react when things go well, go wrong, or go differently to how we had planned can help us to react and manage situations better.

**Materials:** a copy of the table for each student; scenarios written/projected on the board

Ask students to complete the following table about different emotions:

When I'm	I think ...	I feel ...	I do ...	Others see me
angry				
happy				
under pressure/stress				
tired				
alone				
in a crowd				
wrong				
[other]				

Do they think, feel or do the same things for different emotions?

Next ask the students to answer the following questions in the column for each emotion:

(When I'm angry... ) others see me ....

Ask students to think about how their reactions will make others think and feel.

Could this influence what other people do?

Can this be positive or negative?

Explain that sometimes what we do seems to conflict with how we feel, for example,

- people cry when they are happy;
- people smile or laugh when they are nervous or in a stressful situation;
- some people talk to themselves (or even shout or swear);
- some people feel they have to make themselves the centre of attention.

Put the students into groups and ask them to create three scenarios for a particular situation (see box):

**Scenario 1** – based on some of their own reactions to the situation

**Scenario 2** – based on the WORST possible reactions to the situation

**Scenario 3** – the BEST possible reactions to the situation (which creates a positive outcome)

Possible situations:

1. You arrive very late at night at a very expensive hotel to find they have lost your booking and all the rooms are full.
  2. You lent a valuable, favourite possession to an exhibition and it has been stolen.
  3. Your boss said he needed the 80-page report at the end of next week, but he's now asked for it by the end of today.
  4. It's the biggest holiday/festival of the year and you can't get home to be with your family, but all your friends have left.
  5. You have just passed a really difficult exam and got an A, but your friend got a D.
- Can we 'master our feelings'?



# GET ORGANISED

## Email organisation



Einstein was a scientist who made the most of his time. In images and photographs his desk looks messy but he knew where to find what he needed. He was able to work on several theories at the same time but he found a system of filing that worked for him and he stuck to it, being able to find things at a moment's notice.

**Aim:** This lesson gives students practical ideas for getting organised in the digital world.

**Materials:** mobile phone with messages or email system on a computer/tablet

**Don't multi-task to be more productive**

1. Set aside 20 minutes, every couple of hours, to go through your emails. Once this time has passed, log out of your email programme or turn off your internet connection and work on your paperwork or projects.
2. Use the sort functions to maximise the 20 minutes
  - i. Sort/quickly scan for any red flags, urgent or emails marked with a ! Open and read these straight away – especially if they are from your line manager/boss.
  - ii. Sort by subject to pull together email streams – read the earliest one, so you understand what the initial email was about AND THEN the most recent one to see if you need to reply or if the discussion has been resolved/answered. If you need to get involved, refer back to the replies and forward, action or save as appropriate.
  - iii. Sort by sender. Immediately Trash/delete anything not relevant to your job (usually insurance, online courses, holidays and commercial offers). With the remaining emails try the following...

### 3. Sort out all the messages that come into your inbox FAST

**Forward it** – if you have a request that someone else should, or could action, forward the email to that person with any instructions or deadlines that might be needed – if it's urgent/important, make sure you ask for notification once read and put a follow up flag in your calendar to follow up (for example a week later).

**Action it** – if someone is asking you to do something (and it's part of your job/only you can do it) prioritise it into your workload. Does it need to be done today (morning or afternoon), tomorrow, this week, next week or by a deadline? Then set the wheels in motion to answer that request.

**Save it** – if something needs no further action or is a standard circular, confirmation or an acknowledgement, save it into a folder and get it out of your inbox.

**Trash it** – Many of us get emails we are sure we didn't sign up for. All emails should have an unsubscribe button. Click on this and then delete the email.

*With learners for life*

