Write or Wrong

The way that we communicate can affect everything from our personal life to our professional lives. The way we communicate with our boss, colleagues and other professionals can make or break a relationship that you have with them. Learning how to communicate your thoughts on paper can be a challenge especially when the other person has no idea what you are generalizing. Learn ways to improve your written communications and avoid possible sticky situations.

Youth Will Learn:

Workforce Skills: Written communication, problem-solving, working with others.
Success Indicators: Youth will be able to identify parts of written communication that help to clarify the expectations of the author. Youth will practice the seven tips for writing clear directions.

What You Need:

Time Involved: 20-30 minutes
Suggested Group Size: Any size
Materials Needed:
- Pencils or pens
- Paper (half sheets of paper will work just fine for your group)
- “Tips for Writing Clear Directions” Handout

Facilitator Tips: Many recipes or directions activities can add some variety to this exercise. If you have the facility to use a kitchen it could be a good learning tool.

The Activity

1. Ask the youth to think of a time when someone has left them written instructions to complete a task. Whether it be chores at home, a school assignment, or a camp craft activity there are many example of a situation where they are left only words to explain what is expected of them.
2. Each person will write instructions for some form of activity. Be sure to NOT include the title of the activity but to just write down instructions for how to complete the task. The task can be simple or complex, but must include at least 5 steps.
3. Youth will join into groups of three or more and exchange their written instructions. They are not permitted to explain anything and must keep quiet while the person explains the activity step by step to the 3rd person. If time permits this can also be done as a larger group. Members will attempt to complete the activity and must only do what they are told (acting the steps out as best as possible). As holes are found in the instructions they must only do what they are literally told. Once they have completed the person who wrote the activity will explain what they were supposed to do and note the gaps in their instructions if any.

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**Talk It Over**

After the youth have finished this activity, gather the group back together and begin to talk about the things that they experienced while following directions.

**Share**
- What was most difficult about writing your directions?
- What kind of things did you forget in writing your directions that might be implied otherwise?

**Process**
- Was it hard to only do what the steps said?
- Did you find that each person has a unique way of explaining the steps?
- What things were the same in all the directions?

**Generalize**
- Why is it important to be able to understand written communications?
- What kinds of things make it easier when communicating directions to others?

**Apply**
- In what kind of situations might you encounter where you need to write something down for someone?
- What types of camp activities do we write directions down?
Tips for Writing Clear Directions

1. Use a bulleted or numbered list.
2. Use proper headings to explain the activity.
3. Use verbs to begin your instructions.
4. Location, size, color and shape of objects can help to clarify your instructions.
5. Avoid making instructions with ten or more steps.
6. Write clearly and fully explain yourself in each step.
7. Ask someone else to read them and explain if they understand what you are asking of the other person.