

The program opens with students asking, *Why do I have to learn this? What is the point of this subject? Who cares if I'm late for class? What difference does it make?* The narrators explain that students often wonder about these questions, challenging whether or not the subjects they are studying are truly relevant or will in any way make a difference in the world of work. The narrators tell the audience that this program will help answer those questions as they explore many of the major skill areas that students develop in school, and take with them into the world of work. The program begins with self-management skills.

Ana shuts off her alarm and goes back to sleep. When she awakens again, she's late and hurries to leave for school. She arrives late to class, and her teacher tells her that she has missed important information that she must get from a classmate to prepare for an upcoming test. A narrator tells the audience, "Now Ana is at a disadvantage because she has to rely on someone else for the information she needs." She is also developing the kind of self-management problems that often get people fired.

Ms. Kendall, a music producer, appears next. She explains that she needs workers that she can count on. We then see Ms. Kendall call Rob into her office and ask about his late work assignments. She tells Rob that she has no choice but to fire him. She explains that she can't meet her deadlines when he misses his deadlines. Excuses don't matter—what matters is meeting deadlines. A narrator tells the viewers, "When teachers demand assignments be completed on time, they are preparing students for the world of work."

Mr. Alzamora, owner of a clothing store, is the next speaker. He comments that it's always the same people who don't get to work on time who perform poorly. He believes the problem lies in their attitude. Next we see Jerry making a presentation to the class. He is poorly prepared; his audience is bored. He can't answer basic questions posed by his teacher, Mr. Langley. Mr. Langley comments to the audience that when he grades his students, he usually takes their attitude into account. It is clear that Jerry made little effort in his presentation. This affected his performance and will affect his grade.

Next, the narrators comment on the importance of self-management skills and mention other employment skills such as accepting responsibility and dressing appropriately. Then they introduce the next skills area: communication skills.

In the next scene, Nayda, Eric and Ana are planning a fundraiser for their class trip. Eric suggests that they hold a bake sale. Nayda complains that a bake sale is boring. Eric is irritated, but he asks Ana what she thinks. Ana thinks a bake sale is a good idea. Nayda complains again, insisting that Eric's idea is dumb. Eric gets mad and tells her to go work on another committee. Nayda leaves abruptly, and the committee's work comes to a halt.

The narrators explain that Nayda probably didn't mean to make Eric mad. She just wanted to do something different to raise money. They tell the audience that Nayda needed better communication skills to avoid conflicts. It's important to pay attention to other people's feelings. We see the scene again, but this time Nayda takes a moment to compliment Eric's suggestion before she offers her own idea. The three teens are able to discuss the ideas and Eric and Ana agree to Nayda's idea.

The narrators point out that the first rule of good communication is to never put down or ridicule someone else's idea. It will only make them mad and cause problems. Next, the narrators explain that communication is a two-way street. If the listener doesn't understand what is being said, it's his/her obligation to ask questions. When Gina gets a D on her math exam, her teacher asks Gina if there is a problem. Gina admits that she doesn't understand the work. The teacher asks why Gina never asks questions to clear up any confusion, but Gina has no real answer. The teacher tells Ana, "Remember to ask questions when you don't understand something."

The narrators tell viewers that asking a question might feel risky because you may fear that everyone else knows the answer and you will look dumb. They assure viewers that in order to learn, you need to take a chance. At this point, we see Keith with his employer, Mr. Wells. Keith asks Mr. Wells which tasks he should make his priority. Mr. Wells is glad to instruct Keith. Then Mr. Wells comments to the audience that when his employees ask questions, he knows it means that they are thinking about their work. Employees who don't ask questions, he says, usually make more mistakes.

The narrators introduce the next section: computer literacy. The narrators remind viewers that it is critical to know how to use the computer as a work tool. Greg tells Gina he has to do a report over again because his teacher said his sources were not good. The teacher expects Greg to use valid sources of information. Gina tells Greg that her teacher said they can tell a source is valid if it's published in a respected journal or newspaper, or book. You can't just use any blog on the Internet as a source because they're not always experts in the subject.

At this point, the narrators comment that it's also important to become familiar with the computer programs that are used in the workplace. We see Rob being turned down for a job because he doesn't know any of the programs the employer needs. The narrators advise the audience to identify and take courses on these kinds of programs when they're offered.

In the next section, we see a group of students trying to solve a math problem with their teacher. Nayda offers a first step, and then Greg suggests an alternate way to get to the correct answer—but it's not very efficient. Ana offers the most efficient way to solve the problem and the teacher praises the students for their efforts. The narrators tell viewers that when you learn to think critically, you are able to generate different solutions and compare

them. Some solutions are better than others because they're more efficient or just work better for some other reason.

At this point in the program, viewers see Keith and his co-worker Lara working together to solve a problem for Mr. Wells. He needs to know how many square feet of granite to order for a counter top. When Keith and Lara figure it out, Mr. Wells comments that, in his experience, many high school graduates can't do simple problems like this. Yet it is crucial to his business for his employees to have these skills. The narrators comment that whether it's how best to support your opinion in a book report, or how best to say something in a foreign language, school teaches important critical thinking skills.

In the next section on basic literacy (reading, writing and mathematics), we see Greg struggling to finish reading a book; he knows there will be a test on the book's content. As he talks with his brother Jerry, it becomes clear that Greg is having trouble with comprehension. Jerry points out that Greg needs to devote more time to his reading so he can take notes and think about what he's reading. The narrators comment that the average teen spends three hours a day watching TV and using other media while many only spend 30 minutes on their homework. They tell the audience that Greg needs to adjust his priorities. The only way to get good at reading is to read a lot.

Ms. Kendall returns to tell viewers that she often sends out fifteen memos a day. She needs to assume that all her employees can read and understand the memos she distributes. She describes how important writing skills are to her, since she has to write all these memos. Gina and Eric talk about the skills they learn in school involving the importance of rewriting.

The narrators remind the viewers about the examples they have viewed of how important basic math is when it comes to a future career. Mr. Alzamora tells the viewer that he knew from a young age he wanted to own his own business. He remarks that math skills are essential to the running of any business. To be successful, you have to keep good financial records of how much money is being earned and how much is being spent.

As the program draws to a close, the narrators sum up all five areas of basic school skills and point out their connection to the five basic work skills areas in the program.