

Workplace Rights

The **BIG** Idea

- What are my rights as an employee?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Work World Scenarios (10 minutes)
- II. Your Rights (15 minutes)
- III. What Should You Do? (15 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- PORTFOLIO PAGES:**
 - Portfolio pages 31–33, Grade 9 Skills Checklist (Finding A Job skills only)
- STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**
 - Student Handbook page 109, What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know: Rights & Responsibilities
 - Student Handbook pages 110–112, What Should You Do?
- FACILITATOR RESOURCE PAGES:**
 - Facilitator Resource 1, Work World Scenarios: Employee Rights
 - Facilitator Resource 2, Work World Scenarios: Employee Rights (Answer Key)
- Overhead projector or laptop & LCD projector
- Container to hold slips for Activity I

OBJECTIVES

During this activity, the student(s) will:

- Discover that they have rights, as well as responsibilities, in the workplace.
- Discern between correct, and incorrect, ways to act on the job.
- Practice making decisions they might encounter at work.

OVERVIEW

In the previous lesson, students considered their responsibilities as employees. This lesson explores the other side of the employer-employee relationship, the rights of teen workers. First, individual students respond to hypothetical situations in the workplace. Next, they review **Student Handbook page 109, What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know: Rights and Responsibilities**, to see what rules apply. Finally, student teams consider additional workplace scenarios and come up with solutions, presenting their group's most difficult case to the class.

PREPARATION

- List **THE BIG IDEA** and the day's activities on the board.
- Write the day's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- For **Activity I, Warm Up: Work World Scenarios**, write the following on the board:
Issue:
 - What is the employee's right?
 - How can the problem be resolved?
- Make transparencies of the following pages:
 - **Student Handbook page 109, What Every Teen Worker Should Know: Rights & Responsibilities**
 - **Student Handbook pages 110–112, What Should You Do?**
- Review the information on the legal aspects of teen employment at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/index.html> and <http://www.youthrules.dol.gov/>.
- Be prepared to field any workplace questions that come up, including those pertaining to sexual harassment, and be aware of issues that may need to be referred to the guidance counselor. Note that laws re: minimum wage, etc., vary from state to state. It will be helpful to your students if you know the rules that apply to them.
- Cut **Facilitator Resource 1, Work World Scenarios: Employee Rights** into strips.
- For **Activity III, What Should You Do?**, consider how you'll split the class into teams.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Discussion in **Activity II, Your Rights**, may be shortened or lengthened to suit the needs of your students. (They'll have an opportunity to consider other workplace scenarios in **Activity III, What Should You Do?**.)

For any of the activities in this lesson, you may want to include role-playing productive ways to address and resolve workplace problems.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: Work World Scenarios (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last week, we talked about your responsibilities as an employee (worker). This week, we're going to talk about your employer's (your boss's) responsibilities to you. As a worker, you have certain rights—things the government says your employer owes you. Today, we'll find out what some of those rights are.
2. [Place scenarios from **Facilitator Resource 1, Work World Scenarios: Employee Rights** into a hat or paper bag, and have a student draw a slip. Read the scenario aloud, dramatically, and refer students to these items listed on the board:

Issue:

What is the employee's right?

How can the problem be resolved?

Have students identify the issue and the employee's right in the situation. Then have them model how they might talk to the employer to resolve the problem. Use **Facilitator Resource 2, Work World Scenarios: Employee Rights (Answer Key)** for additional information about students' legal rights in each situation.]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Standing up for yourself isn't always easy. There are a couple of things to keep in mind when a problem comes up.
 - Telling you what to do is part of your boss's job. If all workers did only what pleased them, nothing would get done.
 - Bosses have most of the power in a situation. They're the ones who are paying you, and they can fire you if they're not happy with your performance.
 - Fortunately, the government recognizes this difference in power, and there are laws that protect your rights as a worker. The government isn't interested in every little dispute, and the law doesn't have anything to say about employers speaking to you in a mean way or expecting you to do too much work. But the law is clear about safety issues and your basic human rights.

II. Your Rights (15 minutes)

1. [Have students turn to **Student Handbook page 109, What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know: Rights and Responsibilities**. As a class, read through the list of workers' rights (above the dotted line).]

2. [Ask students to brainstorm a list of employee problems at work, and write this on chart paper. Choose several to debrief as a class: identify the issue, state the employee’s right, model what to say or do, as in **Activity I, Warm Up: Work World Scenarios**.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Resolving conflict at work is a lot like resolving conflict in other places. It’s important to stay cool and treat the other person with dignity and respect, even if you think they’re not treating you that way.

You may feel like storming off and quitting. One of the difficulties with that approach is that you never get good at resolving problems. And even if you can easily find another job, it’s not in your interest to leave a trail of angry and dissatisfied employers behind you. Instead, you want to build relationships with employers who can recommend you for better jobs as you get older and more experienced.

The opposite approach is not saying anything when you’re having a problem. This doesn’t work well, either. Employers can’t read your mind, and need to know when you’re having difficulties.

III. What Should You Do? (15 minutes)

1. [Divide students into teams and direct them to **Student Handbook pages 110–112, What Should You Do?**, where they’ll see a list of potential workplace situations faced by teens. Place a transparency of this page on the overhead projector, so students can follow along as you explain what to do.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Now you’re ready to try resolving workplace problems on your own. You’ll have your teammates for guidance today. For Part A, I’d like you to look through the list and circle three problems that you and your teammates think would be easy to resolve. Be alert. Some of these are problems that require you to do something, like call work to let them know you’re sick. Would that be a right or a responsibility? (Responsibility)

Others are problems where you have to stand up for your rights. You don’t have to write anything on the first line for these “easy” problems. On the second line, write what you should do. [Give an example.]

2. [Give students a few minutes to write down solutions to their three easy problems.]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** For Part B, I'd like you to put a star beside the three problems you think would be most difficult to solve. What goes on the first line? Depending on the problem, the right or responsibility that gives a clue as to the appropriate action to take. You can find a list to choose from on **Student Handbook page 109, What Every Teen Worker Should Know: Rights & Responsibilities**. Let's try one together. [Refer students to question #10 and have someone read the scenario aloud.]

Notice that it says "responsibility" on the line below. Now look at your list of responsibilities on the top of the page. Which one best describes your responsibility here? (to show up on time, and work assigned hours)

What should you do? [Have students discuss appropriate behavior, which could include the following: Thank your girlfriend for picking you up and tell her you'll meet her in the parking lot in 10 minutes. If you've been working really hard and never leave early, you could ask your boss if it's OK to go. Under no circumstances should you leave without getting an OK, or leave if it means dumping your coworkers with extra work.]

4. [Allow students to work in their groups for five minutes. When time is up, ask for volunteers to describe one of the situations they chose, the right or responsibility they identified, and their solution.]

IV. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. [Express to students that, occasionally, people in the workplace try to take advantage of teens, because they think teenagers won't know their rights.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Don't let that happen to you. If an employer asks you to do something dangerous or unfair, it's your right to refuse, knowing that the law is on your side. If you find yourself in a situation where you're not sure what to do, ask an adult for help figuring it out.
3. [Also, remind students that their rights and responsibilities may differ from job to job, so it's important to find out the rules and expectations in every new workplace.]

SKILLS CHECKLIST

Direct students' attention to **Portfolio pages 31–33, Grade 9 Skills Checklist**. Have students complete the skills checklist questions for Finding a Job skills.

FINDING A JOB

I can ...

Identify places that hire teens.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Give examples of how my experiences match skills needed to do a job.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Fill out a job application.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Answer interview questions.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Ask good questions in a job interview.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Recognize my rights and responsibilities in the workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well

Work World Scenarios: Employee Rights

Tashawn, 18, works for the city recreation department. He and his coworkers are painting the floor of the rec center gym. The paint fumes give Tashawn a headache, and he has reported this problem to his boss. Last week, his boss said he would look into getting respirators so the workers wouldn't have to breathe the paint fumes. So far nothing has been done. Today one of Tashawn's coworkers went home sick from the fumes. What should Tashawn do?

Natasha, 15, works at a clothing store. This week, her manager scheduled her to work on Wednesday from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. What should she do?

Justin is 15 years old. He just got his first job and is working at a restaurant. His new manager assigns him to work in the kitchen, operating the deep fat fryer. His manager shows him how to use the fryer. Justin is not sure of the instructions and is worried about getting burned. What should he do?

Nicole has a summer job at an amusement park. Over the 4th of July holiday weekend, the park is very busy and Nicole winds up working extra hours. Later, her boss tells her that the company can't pay her for her extra work. Instead, he offers her free tickets to the park. What should Nicole do?

Imani is Muslim, and she wears a hijab (head scarf) as part of her religion. Her manager at the grocery store where she works tells her that the store has a "no hats" policy, and that she must remove the hijab while she is working. What should Imani do?

Work World Scenarios: Employee Rights (Answer Key)

1. Tashawn, 18, works for the city recreation department. He and his coworkers are painting the floor of the rec center gym. The paint fumes give Tashawn a headache, and he has reported this problem to his boss. Last week, his boss said he would look into getting respirators so the workers wouldn't have to breathe the paint fumes. So far nothing has been done. Today one of Tashawn's coworkers went home sick from the fumes. What should Tashawn do?

If a worker notices a safety hazard at work, he should first report it to his supervisor. If his concerns are not addressed, he can file a complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration or state labor offices. It is illegal for employers to fire employees for reporting workplace safety problems.

(Source: www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/index.html)

2. Natasha, 15, works at a clothing store. This week, her manager scheduled her to work on Wednesday from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. What should she do?

Natasha can only work these hours during the summer, so she should talk to her boss. Fourteen- and 15-year olds can work only during hours when school is not in session, and no earlier than 7 a.m. and no later than 7 p.m. (From June 1 through Labor Day, they may work until 9 p.m.) Teens in this age group may work no more than:

- 3 hours on a school day
- 18 hours in a school week
- 8 hours on a non-school day, and
- 40 hours in a non-school week.

There are no restrictions on the work hours of youth age 16 or older.

(Source: www.youthrules.dol.gov)

3. Justin is 15 years old. He just got his first job and is working at a restaurant. His new manager assigns him to work in the kitchen, operating the deep fat fryer. His manager shows him how to use the fryer. Justin is not sure of the instructions and is worried about getting burned. What should he do?

Teens younger than 16 are allowed to work in restaurants but are not permitted to cook, except at soda fountains, lunch counters, snack bars, and cafeteria serving counters. Teens also have the right to say "no" to job assignments that threaten their safety. Justin should let his boss know that one of his older coworkers needs to perform this work.

(Source: www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/index.html)

4. Nicole has a summer job at an amusement park. Over the 4th of July holiday weekend, the park is very busy and Nicole winds up working extra hours. Later, her boss tells her that the company can't pay her for her extra work. Instead, he offers her free tickets to the park. What should Nicole do?

All workers, including teens, have the right to be paid for all of their work. If a worker believes her paycheck is wrong, she has the right to question her employer about her pay. Nicole should let her boss know she's entitled to additional pay.

(Source: www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/index.html)

5. Imani is Muslim, and she wears a hijab (head scarf) as part of her religion. Her manager at the grocery store where she works tells her that the store has a "no hats" policy, and that she must remove the hijab while she is working. What should Imani do?

Imani may request a religious exception to the "no hats" policy. It is her responsibility to explain to her employer that the reason she is asking for the exception is so that she can observe her religion.

(Source: www.youth.eeoc.gov)

What Every Teen Worker Needs to Know: Rights and Responsibilities

RIGHTS

Teen workers have the right to:

- Minimum wages and overtime pay specified by the government. (Rules vary from state to state.)
- A safe workplace.
- Breaks during the work day. (Rules vary.)
- Job assignments and hours that are legal for teens.
- Job assignments appropriate to their age and experience.
- Payment for medical bills if they're hurt on the job.

Employers must provide a workplace where all workers can:

- Work with freedom from racial or religious harassment.
- Work with freedom from sexual harassment, including inappropriate personal questions or physical contact.
- Refuse to perform any job that could be harmful to life or health.
- Ask for an explanation of their paycheck.
- Speak up without punishment for reporting a workplace safety or discrimination problem.
- Read and ask for an explanation of any papers they're asked to sign.

Workplace rights are based on OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act) guidelines.

For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/index.html> and <http://www.youthrules.dol.gov>.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Teen workers have the responsibility to:

- Ask questions, and/or request training, about how to perform the job.
- Show up on time and work assigned hours.
- Perform their assigned jobs.
- Be sober/drug free on the job.
- Call in sick if they're too ill to work.
- Follow employer's safety guidelines, and wear required protective clothing and equipment.
- Read workplace signs, and take an active role in keeping themselves safe.
- Treat coworkers and customers with courtesy and respect.
- Follow company rules and procedures.
- Work together to solve problems, and let employers know when help is needed.

What Should You Do?

#1. You're scheduled to work from 9:00 to 3:00, but your friends want you to go with them to a 2:30 movie.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#2. You wake up with a fever. All you can think about is going back to sleep.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#3. Your boss asks you to use a cutting machine you've never even seen before.

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____

#4. A coworker asks you for a date, and you refuse. S/he gets angry and calls you hateful names.

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____

#5. Your boss tells you to clean up some chemicals that spilled. The fumes make you feel sick.

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____

#6. You get a flat tire on the way to work. You can change it, but it will take time.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#7. Your friend at work has a job you like better than yours. One day she suggests that you switch.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#8. There's a poster about work safety in the lounge, but you've never bothered to read it.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#9. Your boss tosses you his keys and says to move his truck to the back of the warehouse. You don't have a license.

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____

#10. Your girlfriend is picking you up from work. She calls your cell phone and says she's outside, waiting. You've finished for the day, but you're not supposed to leave for another 10 minutes.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#11. You're bussing dinner tables at a restaurant. The bartender says "don't tell" and gives you a beer.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#12. You slip at work and break your arm. The bills are enormous.

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____

#13. You hate the way you look in the goggles you're required to wear. You take them off whenever that cute new guy/girl at work walks by.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#14. Your boss explains how to back up your data on the new computer, but you aren't sure you understand.

Responsibility: _____

What should you do?: _____

#15. You sold shoes all day today, from 10:00 until 5:00, without stopping for a minute. You didn't eat lunch and now you're dizzy.

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____

#16. At the end of the week, you figure out how much money you earned, but when you get your paycheck, it's much less.

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____

#17. You apply for a job and the interviewer asks where you go to church.

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____

#18. Your boss asks you to sign a contract that's complicated and full of legal terms. You hesitate, not knowing what it is. She gets annoyed, and says, "Everyone signs it. It's fine!"

Right: _____

What should you do?: _____