

Build a **HOME**

Build a **CAREER**

ENGLISH/COMMUNICATIONS

Reading, Writing and Residential Construction



The Workforce Development Arm of the National Association of Home Builders
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The Lesson Booklet series:

- Career Exploration
- English/Communications
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies

Lessons are built around steps in the HOME BUILDING PROCESS

PLANNING AND DESIGN PHASE

- Development/Construction Management
- Financial Management
- House Design
- Site Selection
- Determine Materials/Costs
- Zoning/Permits
- Site Preparation

CONSTRUCTION PHASE

- Purchase Materials
- Laying Foundation
- Framing
- Electrical/Plumbing/HVAC Installation
- Insulation
- Flooring
- Roofing
- Window Installation
- Drywalling/Finishing and Tapers
- Select plumbing, electrical, cabinet fixtures and floor coverings
- Finishing—carpentry, painting, tiling
- Flooring installation
- External finishing

THE HOME INTERIOR

- Smart House Enhancements
- Interior Design

LANDSCAPING

HOME BUYING

- Financing/Closing

HOME SELLING (ongoing throughout process)

- Public Relations/Advertising
- Marketing and Sales

ENGLISH/COMMUNICATIONS

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ENGLISH/ COMMUNICATIONS

Advertising/Marketing
Communication
English
Journalism
Language Arts
Speech

Introduction

In this Information Age, the ability to communicate well, and in a variety of ways, is a necessity for all your students.

Certainly, technology has added another level to literacy as digital media and internet capabilities continually transform and elevate our expectations and our capabilities.

But at the core, the fundamentals remain constant. In fact, in order to fully and intelligently utilize the growing range of communications options, your students must be able to listen, observe, comprehend, analyze, and articulate their ideas and information clearly, both in written and spoken forms.

This booklet uses the familiar activities of home building, home selling and home buying as the basis for six lessons and exercises that can help your students develop and refine their ability to think critically and communicate clearly.

For additional writing activities, see *Unit 2: Where's the Career* in the Career Exploration book. *Exploration 4: Create a Career Expo* in that unit includes a Brochure Content Checklist and Guides for an Effective Brochure that you may find helpful in other writing exercises.

LESSON 1

Listen & Learn: Communication on the Job

Listening carefully and correctly interpreting another person's instructions or information is a basic and often overlooked communication skill, critical for success at school, at work and in life. People today are accustomed to having sound and noise around them and have learned to tune out. If they learn to actively listen, students may discover they can become better communicators than they thought possible. In this activity, students examine the art of listening by observing and interviewing building industry professionals who can't complete their job without listening to what clients, customers and co-workers are saying.

Preparation

- Collect resources on listening – articles or web sites – that can provide background for class discussions.
- Contact building industry professionals (architect, carpenter, interior decorator, banker/ mortgage broker, real estate agent) willing to participate in classroom discussions and provide students with real-world, on-the-job experiences.

Procedure

- Conduct a listening exercise with the class by reading a familiar story or giving routine instructions for an assignment, but changing some part of what you are saying so it does not make sense if they are really listening.
- Discuss the skill of listening. Ask students to brainstorm how that communication skill would be important in a job setting. Talk about the process of home building in the context of communication. If you were an architect, who would you listen to? What could happen if you were not listening – to a client or to a supplier of bricks or wood or to a partner in your firm who knows building codes better than you?
- Schedule a contractor or architect, an interior designer and a banker or real estate professional (people from different aspects of home building) to participate in a panel discussion on the importance of listening in their careers. Ask each of them to share specific examples and stories of how listening carefully helped them accomplish something or avoid a costly mistake.
- Line up job shadowing opportunities for students or small teams of students. Ask them to observe and take notes on how and when the professional had to listen to someone – a co-worker, a customer/client, a supervisor.
- Hold a class discussion following the job shadow experience and ask students to share their observations on the role listening played.

LESSON 2

Talk the Talk: Vocabulary of Home Building

Many occupations have their own language or jargon. Everyone is familiar with the term “legalese,” and anyone who has watched a medical TV show is aware of a distinct medical vocabulary. Home building, home buying and home selling all have unique jargon that many of your students will encounter later in their lives.

Learning the language of an occupation will not only help students expand their vocabulary and their horizons, it will also help them understand how careers and companies can develop a distinct culture built around their shared tasks and vocabularies.

Preparation

- Copy vocabulary lists included in the following Lesson Books:
 - Math Lessons: Unit 1, Math in Construction; Unit 2, Home Buying.
 - Science Lessons: Unit 1, Science of Building.
- Collect professional materials that use building industry language: Loan applications, mortgage contracts, real estate ads, blueprints, and professional brochures or magazines for builders, carpenters, HVAC professionals, plumbers, landscapers, etc.

Procedure

- Talk about the language of occupations. Ask students if parents or family members work in a job or company that has its own vocabulary or language that might not be familiar to everyone. Ask for examples.
- Distribute vocabulary lists and professional materials. You may want to divide students into small groups or teams who will learn different building industry languages – home selling/mortgages, home buying/real estate, home design/architecture, home construction. Note that construction can be subdivided into framing and flooring, plumbing, electrical, etc.
- Tell each team they are going to learn the language of their area of building and share their knowledge through a display. The display should include a dictionary of terms and definitions, visuals, charts and even audio or video.
- Work with your local HBA to line up professionals who can work with each of the teams to create an interesting and informative display of the language of home building.

LESSON 3

Visual Imagery: Painting Pictures with Words

This lesson focuses on the use of language to create a visual image in the reader's mind. In the same way that authors of stories and books use language that helps the reader "see" the setting in his/her mind, writers of newspaper and magazine ads for homes must create a visual image. Using familiar literature and home magazines, students will analyze the use of imagery and create their own descriptive articles and ads.

Preparation

- Select a few familiar novels or stories that have also been made into movies or have web sites. These may be stories you are currently studying in class or classics students have read in other classes. Bring the book and the video to class for the introduction to this lesson.
- Identify magazines that specialize in building and home design such as *Home*, *Southern Living*, *Architectural Digest*, or *Builder's Digest*, as well as magazines that feature and describe different home plans.
- Contact a realtor or builder/developer who can talk about how ads/stories are written to "show" homes.

Procedure

- Lead a class discussion about visual imagery in writing – in books, magazines, newspapers, and the writing that is done for radio and TV.
- Read short selections from novels or stories that describe a setting and create a very definite visual image. Ask students to talk about what they “see.” Then show that portion of the movie and ask them to compare the actual visuals with what they imagined the scene would look like. Discuss how particular words or descriptive phrases were translated into pictures.
- Have students compare compare and contrast the way stories and ads describe settings.
- Distribute newspaper ads for home and home magazines that describe different home styles and models. Ask students to read them to determine which they find more interesting and/or appealing. Ask, “In which of these ads have you been given enough information to form a visual image of this setting?” If possible, view those homes on the internet or in person. Ask students to make notes comparing what they envisioned and what they actually saw. Stress the importance of integrity in marketing.
- Invite a realtor to talk about how ads and articles are created to market homes. Ask the speaker to bring in examples to show and ask students how they would describe particular properties.
- Engage students in critical and creative thinking by taking a field trip to a new home site, historic home or site, and ask them to write an article and an ad that helps the reader see the setting.
- Students should then peer edit each other’s work and write final versions.
- Have students read their ads and stories in groups of four and critique the accuracy and clarity of their work.

LESSON 4

Persuade Me: The Language of Selling

Students learn to use spoken and written language as a descriptive and persuasive tool, using real estate and home buying/selling as the model.

Preparation

- Collect a supply of newspapers, realtor magazines, and real estate brochures.
- Research internet search engines and realtor sites students can use.

Procedure

- Talk about descriptive language and the way the addition of adjectives and descriptive phrases can change and enhance meaning. As a warm-up exercise, ask students to give you a simple declarative sentence that states an action without much description. For example: The boy went to school on Wednesday. Now ask students to add descriptive words for the boy, for the school and for the day. Experiment with different tones by the kinds of words you add. For example, the boy could be happy, reluctant, well-dressed or feverish. The day could be bright or dark and stormy.
- Ask students how descriptive words and phrases can persuade people to purchase a product such as shoes, a car or a home. Which is more appealing: A blue car? Or an all-wheel drive, turbo-charged sedan with leather interior?
- Distribute real estate sections of the newspaper and ask students to read some of the ads for homes. Discuss what they observe. How long are the ads? What adjectives do they use? What words are the most interesting or appealing?

- Have students look at home sale ads. Ask them to write words that describe homes in three different price ranges. For example, \$400,000 or \$500,000 homes, \$100,000 homes, and homes worth less than \$100,000.
- Have students create a word web for three different price ranges of homes. Lead students in a discussion about similarities and differences in descriptions. Ask students why there are differences.
- Using the word web, have students write strong phrases that could sell homes in each category. Divide students into groups for sharing ideas.
- Find pictures of homes and floor plans in a newspaper or magazine. Using adjectives from the word web, write a description for one of the homes or floor plans, which reflects the price range of the house selected. Share the description within a small group.
- Ask an HBA builder or real estate professional to share various floor plans with the students. The students should then write a description of one or more of the homes that could be used to inform and interest prospective buyers.

LESSON 5

Beyond Words: Communicating an Identity

A logo is a graphic symbol that communicates an identity.

Students will use creative thinking, problem-solving and design skills to design a logo that represents a home-related occupation or career.

Preparation

- Collect a variety of different logos in ads, on clothing labels, T-shirts, bags, product packaging, etc.
- Contact a design professional/design teacher who can visit your class and explain design principles and assist in the design process.

Procedure

- Ask students to bring in ads or items with organization logos. Set up a display of the logos you collect.
- Ask students to examine and analyze the various logos, and answer the following questions: Which are their favorites? Why? Which do think are the most creative? Which are the most effective at communicating clearly and quickly? What can you tell about the intended audience for a particular logo?
- Ask a design professional to talk to the class about principles of good logo design. Students should take notes.
- Ask students to select a home building-related occupation or career to be their logo “client.” Give them a copy of the list of careers in the back of the Career Exploration booklet, or the careers chart handout with Charting A Career Course, also in Career Exploration.

- Ask students to start a client portfolio.
- Have students write a one-paragraph design brief that defines who their client is (plumber, lawyer, bricklayer, landscape architect or mortgage banker), what the client wants the logo to do, who the primary audience for the message is, and how the logo will be used. (In ads? What kind of ads? On clothing? On a building?)
- Ask each student to create two to three thumbnail sketches of logo ideas. The class will select each student's strongest sketch for development.
- Students complete their designs on computer using a graphics program, if possible, or by hand using color chalks or pencils. Have them mount their work on white card stock.
- Final designs can be displayed for other classes to view.
- Students will place a copy of the logo in their portfolio.

Team Teaching/Blended Instruction Opportunities

Graphic Arts/Art, Advertising/Marketing, Mass Communication and Consumer Economics.

Activity Extensions

Be Part of a Logo Session

- Arrange for students to visit an advertising or design agency and, if possible, sit in on a logo development session or simulation.

Create an Identity Package

- Using the logo they created, tell students they will now create letterhead (stationery), envelopes and business cards for their home builder "client."
- Have students bring in samples of letterhead/envelope/business card designs. Distribute copies of the Design Checklist and use that to discuss the samples. If possible, bring in a designer/design instructor to lead the discussion and the design activity.
- Tell students to sketch their ideas in pencil and ask the designer to work with them to refine the ideas. Students can produce final designs on computer, or by hand using colored chalks or pencils.
- Student designs can be displayed in the media center or school display area.

Design Checklist for Letterhead/Envelopes/Business Cards

A letterhead package should:

- Be as unique as a fingerprint
- Include all the appropriate information
- Leave ample space for message in letterhead
- Be designed so that envelope and business card will be similar in design
- Be attractive
- Clearly identify the sender by prominently displaying the name and logo
- Display the sender's address and phone numbers in an easy-to-find location
- Contain information in the letterhead/envelope/business card that is no larger than 8 or 9 points (company name can be larger)
- Reflect the characteristics of the organization or person
- Meet postal regulations for positioning of information
- Make it easy to distinguish between the content of the message on the stationery and the sender's information

Business Card Characteristics

Many of the items in this list are optional. You decide which ones are appropriate for your business card.

- Name of individual
- Name of business or organization
- Address
- Phone number
- Fax number
- E-mail address
- Web page address
- Job title of individual
- Tagline or description of business or organization
- Logo
- Graphic image(s), including purely decorative elements
- List of services or products

Business Card Design Checklist

- Horizontal or vertical layout
- Emphasis on business or organization (name and/or logo)
- Emphasis on individual
- Emphasis on title of individual
- Emphasis on a particular part of the contact information (phone, address, email, etc.)
- Size of logo or other graphics – large (dominant) or small
- Number of colors
- White space (blank spaces) toward the middle or toward the outer edges
- Conservative typeface vs. fun, informal typeface (such as crooked letters, funny shapes, odd sizes, or type that looks like handwriting) or a mix

Logo Characteristics Checklist

A logo should:

- Be distinctive/original
- Be appropriate for the client
- Project a positive image of the client
- Be creative
- Reproduce well in a variety of sizes
- Work on all applications the client needs
- Contain symbols easily interpreted by anyone

Use these questions to guide your logo development:

Who/What is the logo for?

Who is the audience for the product or service?

What should the logo do (communicate)?

How will it be used? (Ads, clothing, on a building, business cards, etc.)

What graphic elements/icons can be used?

LESSON 6

The Building Chronicles: Writing Close to Home

Authors often advise young writers to “write what you know.” This activity invites students to use a common, familiar activity – home construction – as the basis for a writing project of their own design. The objective is to give students the opportunity to choose the style of writing they feel most confident using as a way of encouraging and building writing skills.

The building process provides an ongoing, continually changing activity that provides the variety and topic diversity needed to sustain a several-week writing project.

Preparation

- Working with your HBA partners, identify a new home construction or housing development that is just beginning. Talk with the developer/builder about the class writing project, explaining that students would need access to the site throughout the process and to individual workers for interviews.
- Collect samples of writing styles and different forms of writing to use in class discussions as students prepare for the project.

Procedure

- Discuss different styles of writing and bring different examples to read and share. You could also assign student teams to research some of the styles and present a brief report to the class that defines the style and gives examples. These might include:
 - narrative
 - descriptive
 - informative/classificatory
 - persuasive/classificatory
 - evaluative
 - journalistic
- Talk about forms writing can take, and ask students to bring in examples to share and analyze. These might include:
 - short story
 - essay
 - news story
 - feature article
 - play
 - diary/journal
- Introduce the topic of home building and the building process. Invite one or more building professionals to help lead a discussion and answer student questions.
- Talk about ways students could document the process or some part of the process in writing, for example:
 - a diary approach in which each entry explains the progress that has been made and/or how the writer feels about the process
 - a series of essays that comment on specific aspects of the building process
 - a series of newspaper articles following the classic who, what, when, where, why guides to cover different events that occur as the house is being built
 - a series of interviews with people involved in (or affected by) the home building – workers, the developer, a potential buyer, someone who lives near the construction site
 - a photo essay using student photos and captions to tell the story of the building process or one aspect of it

- Let students choose a style and form they want to use. Ask students to submit a very brief proposal, outlining what they are going to write about and how they are going to present the material.
- Assign each student a partner “editor” for peer editing of completed materials.
- “Publish” the completed writings by producing simple notebooks or wire bound booklets that can become part of the classroom library or shared with other English and Communications classes.

Activity Extension

Create a Story Hour

A National Public Radio program called *This American Life* focuses on a different theme every week and presents different writers’ perspectives on that theme.

- Tell students you are going to create Story Hour tapes on different themes. Students will write short stories or personal essays on a theme and you will record them. Finished tapes can be given to the media center for other classes to listen to and can be played at parent nights. Live readings can also be done at a special assembly.
- Have students develop several themes that revolve around homes and home building. The themes could include: families who are building their first house; a day in the life of a building professional; the best (my favorite) room in the house (can be based on the student’s house, a house they find in a magazine or a model home they visit).
- Assign several students different themes and ask them to develop an essay or short story (be sure to set guidelines and length parameters) on that theme. Have students use peer editing to refine and polish their writing. Select students to be the readers and have readers work with the story writers so they are reading with the inflections and emphasis that the writer intended.

Content Standards

Language Arts

Students will:

- Use listening strategies effectively.
- Apply oral communication skills to interviews, group presentations, formal presentations, and impromptu situations.
- Understand the power of language.
- Use effective oral and written communication skills when working as a team.
- Construct meaning from a wide range of texts, determine author's purpose, and distinguish among the various points of view and their effects on the reader.
- Locate, gather, analyze, evaluate, organize and use information for a variety of purposes.
- Synthesize information from multiple sources to draw conclusions.

Communication Technology

Students will:

- Demonstrate interpersonal skills as they relate to the workplace.
- Identify and apply methods of information acquisition and utilization.
- Apply basic skills in communications, mathematics, and science appropriate to technological content and learning activities.
- Demonstrate and apply design/problem-solving processes.
- Demonstrate the ability to properly identify, organize, plan, and allocate resources.
- Discuss individual interests and aptitudes as they relate to a career.
- Demonstrate technical knowledge and skills in the preparation of art and copy for printing reproduction.

- Express a technical knowledge and an understanding about electronic communication technology.
- Operate a computer utilizing a program related to graphic communications technology.

Process/SCANS/NCDS

- Acquire and use information from a variety of sources.
- Use technology to facilitate the acquisition and dissemination of information.
- Work cooperatively in teams.
- Demonstrate responsibility and integrity in recording events.
- Effectively use basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Support Materials and Resources

Web

- www.word-detective.com/
The Word Detective on the web is the online version of *The Word Detective*, a newspaper column by Evan Morris that answers readers' questions about words and language.
- Internet search engines: Yahoo, Excite, Webcrawler, Alta Vista, etc.

Publications/Printed Material

- Newspapers – Real Estate sections
- Magazines from local realtors
- Design magazines
- Literature textbooks and novels
- Building plan magazines, home magazines and newspapers
- *Making a Good Layout* by Lori Siebert & Lisa Ballard
- *Print and Communication Arts* magazines
- Logo design books

People

- Local Chamber of Commerce
- Building industry professionals
- Graphic design/marketing professionals

Home Building Industry Careers

The Department of Labor has identified more than 100 occupations and careers associated with the residential construction industry, in eight major categories. Here are just a few that might be of particular interest to students who enjoy English, writing, journalism, design, graphics, visual arts, and other types of communications courses:

EXECUTIVE, ADMINISTRATIVE & MANAGERIAL

- Marketing, Advertising, Public Relations Managers
- Personnel, Training and Labor Relations Managers and Specialists

SERVICE

- Sales Agents and Placers, Insurance

PROFESSIONAL SPECIALTY

- Architects, including Landscape Surveyors
- Regional & Urban Planners
- Lawyers
- Teachers, Librarians & Counselors
- Interior Designers
- Public Relations Specialists & Publicity Writers
- Writers & Editors, i.e., Technical Writers
- Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers

MARKETING SALES

- Insurance Sales Workers
- Marketing & Sales Worker Supervisors
- Real Estate Agents, Brokers & Appraisers
- Sales Engineers
- Sales People, Retail, Parts

TECHNICIANS & RELATED SUPPORT

- Drafters
- Computer Programmers
- Legal Assistants & Paralegals
- Title Examiners & Searchers

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