

## Module E: Lesson Plan 16: Workplace Skills

**Topic:** The Toothpick Factory

**Standard(s): Students will:**

- 4.0 Demonstrate employability skills such as working in a group, problem-solving and organizational skills, and the importance of entrepreneurship.

**Length:** One class period

**Objective:** Students will understand the importance of communication and learn about working in a team.

**Materials:** Toothpicks(flat-end), scissors, rulers with  $\frac{1}{4}$  markers, nail files, pencils  
Handout - *Soft Skills Scorecard*

**Description of Activity:**

1. Divide the class into teams of 4, each team will consist of 1) Pre-production Technician, 2) Production Technician, 3) Finishing Technician, and 4) Quality Control Representative.
2. Review the Toothpick Factory Instructions handout.
  - You can give each team a copy or put the instructions on the board/projector.
  - Discuss “What is the Toothpick Factory?”
  - Go over “What will I be doing” and assign each student a job (you can have students select their jobs if you’d like).
  - Give each team 20 toothpicks, a pair of scissors, a nail file, a ruler, and pencil.
  - Go over how much time they have for their order (15 minutes)
  - Go over the order guidelines
  - Begin the game.
  - During the game, look over the *Soft Skills Scorecard* – use the “actions” listed on the scorecard and the sample questions (see Sample Sheet) to facilitate discussion.
3. When the time limit is up, have students complete the *Soft Skills Scorecard*.
4. Using the scorecard, focus on the communication skills **you** observed during the activity. Were students being respectful of each other, were they being bossy, etc?
5. Use the sample questions (see Sample Sheet) to further facilitate the discussion.
6. Encourage students to share *their* observations and discuss what they would change/do differently.
7. **ADDITIONAL OPTIONS:** You can continue the activity by changing the customer order specifications (see Sample Sheet) and/or moving team members around to different teams.
  - This is a great opportunity to see how well the students “adapt” to the change.
  - Discuss their reactions, how did they feel about the change, how did they react, and what would they do different.

**Evaluation:** Students will analyze the skills that are important in the workplace and determine what they need to improve to be a successful team member.

# Sample Sheet

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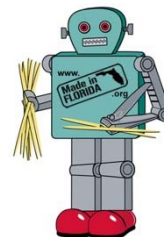
Sample questions to help facilitate the discussion.

1. During the activity, what are some of the things that you felt your team did well?
  - a. Why do you feel these soft skills are important?
  - b. What might have happened if those skills were not used?
2. What are some things that your team did NOT do so well?
  - a. Why do you think that?
  - b. What would you have changed to make this better?
3. From the list of soft skills on your scorecard, what skill(s) did you use?
  - a. How do you feel they contributed to the team?
4. What were some things that happened during the activity that caused problems?
  - a. Talk about how you or your team could prevent this?
  - b. Were there people on your team that were doing a lot of work?
  - c. Were there people on your team that were not doing very much work at all?
5. Would anyone like to share their personal experience?
6. Does everyone see why soft skills are so important?

SAMPLE ORDERS			
ORDER #	HOW MANY?	HOW LONG?	ENDS SHARP/SMOOTH
2	8	1 ¼ inches	No sharp ends
3	8	2 ¼ inches	4 sharp and 4 with smooth

# The Toothpick Factory<sup>®</sup>

## Instructions

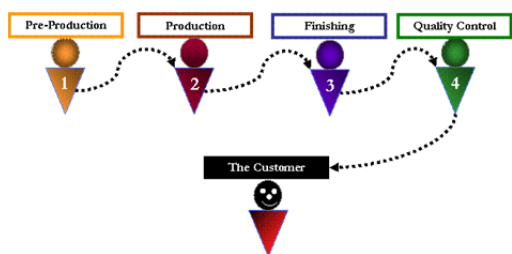


### What is the Toothpick Factory<sup>®</sup>?

A leading manufacturer of custom toothpicks, *the only one of its kind!!*

### What will I be doing?

There are several **Production Team** jobs at the Toothpick Factory. Each **Production Team** must have 4 team members, which are listed below. As a team (or per your teacher), assign each team member a job.



Production Team Steps

- **Pre- production Technician** – measures how long the toothpicks should be and marks where they need to be cut, according to the customer’s order.
- **Production Technician** – cuts the toothpicks to the correct length according to the customer’s order.
- **Finishing Technician** – makes the ends smooth or sharp according to the customer’s order.
- **Quality Control Representative** – checks over the toothpick to make sure it is what the customer ordered, re-measures and checks the ends. This person can send the order back if it’s not right. If the order is good, you would send it on to your customer.

### Custom Toothpick Orders:

Everybody wants custom toothpicks and the Toothpick Factory is the only place to get them! The order has come in from your customers and they are **VERY** specific on what they want, so make sure you pay close attention!

### Production Tools:

To complete the order each team will need a set of production tools (toothpicks, scissors, ruler, nail file, and a pencil).

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### Order information

Complete the order and wait for further instruction from your teacher.

HOW MANY?	HOW LONG?	ENDS SHARP/SMOOTH
8	2 ½ inches	All with one sharp end

### Complete the Soft Skills Scorecard:

Once everyone has completed their orders, each person will complete the Soft Skills ScoreCard. There are no wrong answers, yeah!!!



**Instructions**

Use this scorecard to check how you did! Be honest with yourself; remember there is no wrong answer!! This will help you see what soft skills are important in the workplace and contribute to your success as a team member. Circle the option (1-3) that describes your actions or none if you did not exercise a particular skill this time.

Soft Skill	Actions	How often did you practice these actions today?		
		Not much	A little	A lot
Listening	1) Listen to someone’s question or comment before responding.	①	②	③
	2) Listen to the needs and ideas of others with respect.	①	②	③
Working in Teams	3) Work with peers to establish goals, tasks and processes.	①	②	③
	4) Value everyone’s input.	①	②	③
	5) Encourage cooperation between peers.	①	②	③
	6) Worked with peers to resolve conflicts.	①	②	③
Leading	7) Influence others to accomplish quality.	①	②	③
	8) Encourage team members to agree.	①	②	③
Adapting	9) Express receptivity to input from peers.	①	②	③
	10) Quickly accommodate to changing conditions.	①	②	③
	11) Change production and inspection methods to improve quality.	①	②	③
Speaking	12) Ask appropriate questions.	①	②	③
	13) Communicate with a clear voice.	①	②	③
	14) Presents ideas calmly and clearly.	①	②	③
Add the points in each column.				
Add all three columns.		TOTAL SCORE		

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Not