

# Soft Skills for Employment

## Chapter Nine: Organizational Skills



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**I. Lesson Nine: Organizational Skills**

Teaching Materials:	Duration:	Learning Objective:
PowerPoint and class discussion	15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Raising an awareness of what organizational skills are, why they are important, and what skills an employer might require</li> <li>➤ Increase understanding of how and why to prioritize tasks at work</li> <li>➤ Raising an awareness of the importance of time keeping</li> </ul>
Organizational skill identification discussion	15 minutes	
Establishing priorities— discussion and class activity	20 minutes	
Time keeping discussion and small group case study discussion	30 minutes	
<b>Setting and Method:</b> classroom discussion and small group case study discussion		

**Lesson Summary for Instructors:**

Organizational skills is a vast topic that will need to be customized depending on the students in the class. This lesson touches on time management, setting priorities, as well as understanding that necessary organizational skills may vary depending the job or situation. Instructors may want to investigate individual needs of students to determine if other topics regarding personal organization may need to be included in these lessons.

This is a topic that is difficult to impress upon some students, until they have firsthand knowledge or experience of how personal organization can impact them. Some employees are written up or lose their jobs because of tardies or absences, but struggle to internalize the need for how to change this behavior. Having students hear from employers about how they handle absences at work and why it impacts their business is a great reinforcing message to the lessons taught in the classroom.

## What are Organizational Skills?

Organizational skills are the skills that allow us to function at work, in school and with our extra activities. These skills include the ability to be on time, keep a daily planner, be prepared and knowing what to expect for upcoming situations. How many times have we heard our teachers say that we need to come to class prepared? Usually this includes having the right text book, some papers and a pencil. Believe it or not, your teacher was trying to help you be prepared to get a job.



Employers expect you to come to work prepared; this includes having the right clothing and/or tools, being places on time and not having to waste work time in order to become prepared.

When your teacher asked you to be prepared for class, it might have been annoying and it may have seemed like you were being treated like a child. However, think about it from an employer's perspective. If you work for a construction firm and you don't have your tools, protective clothing, lunch and water, then that employer is losing money while you are getting prepared to get to work. Every minute that its employees aren't working, is lost earnings, which means less money to pay the employees.

Now, think about what organizational skills an employer would expect if you worked in an office? If part of your job was to answer the phone and you didn't write down a message correctly, or lost the message entirely, that can cost that employer time, money and possibly a problem with reputation as well.

## THINK ABOUT THIS...

All jobs have a set of organizational skills needed to do the job well. Think about these jobs and decide what these individuals have to do to keep their professional lives organized so they are successful.

Occupation	Organizational Skills Needed
Teacher	~ ~ ~ ~
Carpenter	~ ~ ~ ~
Secretary	~ ~ ~ ~
Welder	~ ~ ~ ~
Auto Mechanic	~ ~ ~ ~
Biologist	~ ~ ~ ~

## Setting Priorities

Prioritizing tasks and responsibilities during the day is another important organizational skill. Here are some things to consider regarding establishing priorities:

- 1. In order to know how to assign priority, you need to know how important various tasks are not only to you, but to your supervisor and co-workers.**  
If something doesn't seem very important to you, but another person is waiting for you to finish it, then that task needs to have priority.
- 2. How big are the tasks or projects that you need to complete?**  
If they are more complicated projects and need more time, make sure you leave enough time to complete that time consuming project as well as other smaller projects. If you have a larger task to complete, break it down into smaller steps and plan how and when to complete them.
- 3. What are the consequences for not completing tasks on time?**  
This shouldn't be your only rationale for prioritizing, but certainly needs to be considered.
- 4. How much time do you have to complete your expected duties?**  
In that time period, how much time do you need to allow for unplanned responsibilities (i.e. customers coming into the store, equipment breakdowns, etc.)?



### THINK ABOUT THIS...

**Can you think of any other ways that would help you decide your own priorities?**



## THINK ABOUT THIS....

Below is a list of tasks that an office clerk needs to complete. Taking all of the above ideas and guidelines into consideration, look at the following list that might be part of an office job and decide which:

(I) Should be done immediately or as soon as possible

(T) Should be done some time during today

(F) Could be done today if you have time, but could also wait for tomorrow

**Put an I, T or F in front of each task, depending on how much of a priority you think it is.**

- handing out the mail that the mailman just dropped off
- typing the letter your boss gave you to prepare for his attorney
- putting the message on your boss' desk from his accountant
- ordering pens, paper and a printer cartridge from the local office supply company
- taking the billing statements to the post office to be mailed
- dusting the tables and lamp in the waiting area
- returning the message left on your cell phone from your best friend
- filing the statements received in the morning mail
- making hotel arrangements for you and a co-worker to attend a conference out of town
- cleaning and organizing the top of your desk

## Time Keeping

Another very important organizational skills is time keeping. Time keeping is having a strong understanding of what time it is now, how much time is needed for different parts of your day, and how much time you have to complete different tasks and jobs.



### Being on Time

The issue of being late is probably one of the main complaints you have heard from teachers and supervisors when they are unhappy with another person. Tardiness can be a major issue with employers because lost time is lost income for employers and can be a reason that employees have issues or are fired at work. If something unexpected comes up, call your boss and let him/her know about it so they are not wondering what happened to you. However, keep in mind that if they get these calls very often from you, their patience will run out, and so might your job!

There are many reasons why you might be running late. Can you think of a few?

~ *alarm didn't go off*

~  
~  
~  
~  
~

These are reasons why you might OCCASIONALLY be late. You are going to have a problem if your car won't start every other day. Or if your alarm clock never seems to work right.



So, take another look at your list for what can make you run late and think about what you can do to help yourself always be ON TIME?

~ *set two alarms, in two different parts of my room*

~  
~  
~  
~  
~

## HOW DO YOU COMPARE?

**In small groups, read over and discuss the following case study.**



Susan wakes up at 6:30 AM and gets out of bed. She is pleased with herself that she actually got out of bed without her mother yelling at her to get moving before they are late. She has always had a hard time waking up in the morning and usually didn't wake up on her own. Susan generally relied on her mother to wake her up and get her moving to be out the door at 8:00 AM. This morning, since she had extra time, she decided to treat herself to some toast and hot chocolate for breakfast. She went to the kitchen and prepared the meal, and then decided she was feeling generous and made the same for her mother. She delivered the breakfast to her mother and went back to her bedroom to get ready.

Susan looks in her closet and evaluates her options of what to wear that morning. She has extra time today, and decides to really dress up and look nice. She tried five different outfits on and settles on a skirt, top and slip on shoes. This process of finding the right outfit took her about 20 minutes.

Now that she has a cute outfit, it is time to take care of her hair. Susan decided that a complicated braid was just the hairstyle to match the outfit and went to work at sectioning her hair and working on the braid. The first two attempts weren't what she was hoping for, but the third attempt made her happy and was able to fasten it into place after 25 minutes. Susan heard her mother yell that she 10 minutes left before they needed to leave the house. She yelled back to her mother, "OKAY!"

Susan is so happy about how she looks and about getting up early, that she decides to reward herself with a game of Scrabble on her phone. She heard her mother call again, saying it was time to get in the car. Susan was shocked! She had barely even touched the breakfast she made earlier, hadn't brushed her teeth yet, nor gotten her backpack put together for school (even though her mother had asked her to the night before).

Susan heard her mother close the front door behind her as she went to the car, so Susan rushed through the house, grabbing her school books, back pack and tennis shoes for school and ran to get in the car with her mother.



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. What are some things that caused Susan to be late?
2. What are some things that Susan could have done the night before in order to help her morning run more smoothly?
3. Describe what things she could have done differently that morning to improve her routine and time keeping skills?
4. Do you have any of the same issues with time keeping that Susan has?