
Introduction

This kit emphasizes the development of skills that are important in influencing government decisions. It is comprised of four parts: telephone skills, letter writing skills, speaking skills and campaigning skills.

Materials

Telephone Skills
Letter Writing Skills
Public Speaking Skills
The Campaign Game
Practical Politics (text and exercises)

Directions

The public speaking, letter writing and telephone skills are presented in a political context. Students must make presentations to government agencies, write letters to office holders, and in a role-playing situation deal with government bureaucrats on the telephone. The role-play situations stress practical, everyday situations.

The materials can be used to supplement traditional units in Civics or American Problems or they can be used as a separate unit on political effectiveness for the average citizen.

The letter writing and campaign skills units can be used for individual instruction. The public speaking and telephone activity and the campaign simulation require student involvement. All of the materials may be reproduced in copies sufficient for classroom use.

Telephone Skills

Telephone Skills is a role-play activity. There is a Guidelines Sheet which gives the rules for making effective calls. The Sample Call Sheet gives a sample of a poor phone call and a good phone call. There is also a Rating Sheet, and three pages of role-play situations. There are four role-play situations.

All of the sheets are to be duplicated and distributed to the students. Each student should receive more than one rating sheet. On the rating sheet there is room for rating 10 students. They should receive enough sheets to rate all of the students in the class.

The teacher reviews the criteria for making a phone call. The role-playing situations are then divided up among the students. The students role-play their call with the teacher or another student. All of the other students rate the call.

Public Speaking Skills

The procedures in this role-play activity are similar to the telephone role-play. Copies of the guidelines for how to give a good speech, the samples of a good and a bad speech, and copies of the rating sheet should be distributed. The rating sheet has space for rating 16 students.

There are 33 role-play situations. The situations require the students to appear before the planning commission, public regulatory commissions, community organizations, school board, a legislative hearing, county government, small claims court and a city council.

The students evaluate each speaker.

Letter Writing Skills

The letter writing activity can be used either as a class or individual activity. There are four pages which give the students directions on how to write good letters, and samples of good and bad letters.

There are 28 situations for students to use in writing letters. The situations cover the four basic types of letters: requests for action, information, complaints and announcements.

Practical Politics

This is a short text that is a political guide for citizen involvement. The text is 10 pages long and there are 10 pages of exercises to illustrate points made.

The Campaign Game

In this game the class is divided into campaign teams to support a particular issue or candidate. Each member of the team must perform a campaign task. One person must make a speech, another must produce a campaign flyer, another must produce a 30 second radio commercial, yet another must write a letter requesting donations to the campaign, and another must write a press release. One must also give a door-knocking spiel about the issue.

The game contains student directions, the campaign issues, a scoring sheet, and two pages describing the tasks that must be performed.

The students evaluate the efforts of each team and give points. The team with the most points is the winner.

The purpose of the game is to provide students with practical experience in campaign skills.

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ISBN 0-89550-157-0
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Stevens & Shea Publishers, Inc.
P.O. Box 794, Stockton, CA 95201
Phone: (209) 465-1880

1. You are phoning the local IRS Office. You filed your income tax return in February. It is now July. You figure you have \$345 coming back and you need the money very badly. Other people you know filed later than you but have already received their refunds.
2. The neighbor's dog runs loose. It goes to the bathroom on your front lawn. You would like the city dog catcher to do something about it. That is the party you are phoning. The neighbor lets his dog out at night. During the day it is locked up.
3. Your daughter just graduated from high school and you discovered that she could not read the menu at McDaniel's Hamburgers. You are upset and want to do what you can about it. Phone the school district main office.
4. It is 3:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. Your neighbors are having a loud party. It has been going on since about 10:00. You want the police to do something about it so that you can get some peace and quiet.
5. Two months ago your car was struck in the rear by another car. The other driver was given a ticket and you were given the name of that driver's insurance agent. You assumed that the other driver's insurance would pay for the damage to your car because the other driver was at fault. Two months later there is still no payment. It cost you \$785.00 to fix your car. Call the insurance agent.
6. You bought a part for your car from Ace Auto. You were told that it would fit your car. It does not. You would like to return it and get a refund. The part is a Z-87 camshaft and cost \$237. You do not remember the name of the clerk who assured you that it would fit.
7. You have just received a bill from a local department store. You are overcharged by \$100 for a pair of pants that you bought on your charge account. The pants were \$17 and your bill is \$117. You would like the problem taken care of. The name of the department store is the Ace Department Store.
8. You paid \$2.45 for Magic CO-2 Zit Remover. The carton it came in said that it was guaranteed to work or you would get your money back. It not only hasn't worked, but you returned the carton two months ago and asked for a refund and you still haven't received it. Fortunately, the plant is right in your home town. Phone the company and find out where your money is.
9. You live about 3 miles on the downwind side from the sewer plant, which is operated by the city. On hot nights a terrible odor settles right over your neighborhood. It smells like a combination of rotten eggs and decayed dog meat. Your neighbors all think it comes from the sewer. You want it stopped.
10. You own Teddy's Taco Stand. When you arrive one morning you find that the local utility company, which is privately owned, has torn up the street in front of your stand. You asked the crew what they were doing and how long it would take. They responded that it is none of your business. You also have no business. No one can drive up to your taco stand. Phone the utility company.
11. Your child came home with an upset stomach for the second day in a row. You suspect that it is the school lunch. Your child says that they had spaghetti for the last two days at school.

