



Employability skills are transferable skills that can be useful in any job. They involve the development of knowledge, a mindset, and skills that can help youth gain employment. Below are some activities you can do with youth to help them develop and improve these skills.

What If? Scenarios

Materials needed: paper/index cards, pen/pencil/marker

Time: 5 minutes +

Skills practiced: creative thinking, logical inference

On each index card or slip of paper write a What if? Scenario, then fold it in half and put them in a bucket or bowl. One at a time, have youth pick a scenario, read it aloud and discuss as a group. After the topic has been discussed, put it to the side and have a different youth pick another card. This activity would make a great icebreaker or daily warm-up activity. It can be done for as long as you like. The scenarios may be "What if money didn't exist?" or "What if animals could talk?" or "What if you decided to take a gap year before continuing your education to do an internship?" Get creative, get serious, get silly, but make sure they are appropriate for the age-range of youth you are working with. Need help generating some scenarios? These sites have some great ideas:

- 127 What If Questions: <https://icebreakerideas.com/what-if-questions/>
- 70+ Hypothetical Scenarios: <https://www.brightful.me/blog/what-if-questions/>
- 200+ What If Questions: <https://teambuilding.com/blog/what-if-questions>

Escape Room Challenge

Materials needed: At a minimum, something to write on and write with. Use materials you already have access to or that are cheap to purchase

Time: 30 minutes +

Skills practiced: Problem-solving, teamwork, strategic thinking

Youth must solve a series of puzzles and challenges to "escape" the room. One way to consider setting it up is that youth must solve a series of puzzles related to career connected learning in order to get the code or key to unlock a lock box with a prize inside. The prize can be something small like candy. You can buy a lock box or use a shoe box, string, and lock (key or combination). If you use a key, consider hiding it in the pages of a book and make sure one of the last clues directs them to the book. If you have a combination lock you can have youth solve financial literacy scenarios, riddles, or various puzzles that will give them the numbers but not necessarily in the correct order. The game can be set up as extensively or simple as you like. For example if you have a 4-digit combination lock, you could simply create 4 activities that give youth the numbers they need to figure out the combination. Activities could include riddles about careers and pathways or solving a math problem that asks participants to calculate their income based on a word problem. Alternatively, you could add a few extra activities that help them get to the number they will need. For example, if 2 is the number you want them to get to, you could create a riddle about employability skills that gets them to the number 2 like "I am a pair that always go hand in hand; one helps you to listen, the other to understand. Together we ensure success



in all you pursue. What am I?" The answer is communication and teamwork, 2 skills. There are online pdf's that you can purchase that have already put together escape rooms. Here are a few resources that may help as well:

- Make Your Own Escape Room Challenge: <https://activity-mom.com/2018/05/make-your-own-escape-room/>
- Escape Room Ideas: <https://www.playgroupgame.com/escape-room-ideas/>
- How to Set Up and Run a Classroom Escape Room: <https://www.weareteachers.com/build-a-classroom-escape-room-lesson/>

Trust Walk

Materials needed: blind folds, items to be obstacles (tables, chairs, safety cones, etc)

Time: 30 minutes +

Skills practiced: Communication, listening skills

Create an obstacle course that youth have to navigate around. Use whatever you have to create obstacles like tables and chairs. Put the youth in pairs, one will be blindfolded and will have to navigate the course while the other verbally gives them directions of which way to go. The game play can vary. It can be as simple as just getting all the way through, it can be a timed competition where the group with the fastest time wins, or for more advanced play they can't touch any of the obstacles and if they do, they either have to start over or are out. If you decide that both partners must go through the obstacles, consider changing the obstacle slightly for the second member as they may memorize it from their partner going through. At the end of the activity spend some time debriefing as a group. Ask youth what they think went well and what did not go so well. Have them reflect on how it could have been better. Ask them how they think the skills needed to navigate the course connect to skills they will need in their future careers.

Scavenger Hunt

Materials needed: paper for clues, phone/camera

Time: 30 minutes +

Skills practiced: Collaboration, communication, problem-solving

To prepare for a scavenger hunt, decide whether it will be indoor, outdoor or both and decide on a purpose or theme. A theme could be getting to know the jobs in the community where the hunt will take place. Once the theme is established brainstorm a list of places or things you want the youth to see. Maybe you want them to visit a local barber and ask them about their career path, visit a nonprofit organization to see what their impact on the community is, or a health clinic to see the different professions that work in the clinic. You can either create clues that they have to guess what the item is or just provide a list of things that youth need to find. Put youth in groups. You can either tape the clues to the items or station other staff at the locations with the next clue. Or you can provide youth with a sheet that lists all the clues and have them take pictures once they get to each location. Once they return, they show you all the pictures and they have to be correct in order to get credit for completing the scavenger hunt. The team who finishes first with all the right pictures wins. Need some ideas? Here are a few links:



- Free Printable Scavenger Hunt: <https://partiesmadepersonal.com/scavenger-hunt-for-teenagers/>
- Scavenger Hunt Tips: <https://www.teenwire.org/scavenger-hunt-for-teenagers/>

Role Play Scenario

Materials needed: Paper for printing/writing scenarios

Time: 30 minutes +

Skills practiced: Communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, professionalism

Create role play scenarios for youth to practice different situations that may come up in the workplace. Assign different roles to the youth so they can practice being a customer, being the manager, or an employee. Scenarios can include handling a difficult customer, how to resolve conflict on the team, or how to conduct a meeting. Some other scenarios you may include how to respond to constructive feedback, networking at a professional outing, managing time and priorities. Think about situations you may have experienced early in your career to come up with ideas. Still stuck for ideas? Use an AI chat service like [ChatGPT](#), [MagicSchool](#), or [Claude](#) to help generate ideas. After each scenario take a few minutes to discuss as a group, what went right, what should they try differently next time, or other ways to handle the situation. This is another activity that could be a warm-up, especially when introducing new topics.