

 www. 	Employability Skills	
	The Toothpick Factory	
	Lesson Plan	
Created by the FLATE Center for Manufacturing Education, Hillsborough Community College 10414 E Columbus Dr., Tampa, FL 33619 • (813) 259-6577 • www.fl-ate.org		

NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE	GRADE LEVELS
Students are challenged to identify soft skills/employability skills such as communication and teamwork.	ALL
TARGETED SUBJECT AREA	
Employability/Work Skills	
LEARNING OBJECTIVE	TIME FRAME
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students will understand the importance of communication. Students will learn about soft skills. Student will learn about working in teams. 	One Class Period
MATERIALS	
Toothpicks (flat-end), scissors, rulers with $\frac{1}{4}$ markers, nail files, pencils, AND the Toothpick Factory Instructions handout.	
DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTIVITY	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Review the Toothpick Factory Instructions handout. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	



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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.

DISCUSSION

Sample Questions: to help facilitate your 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?



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6. Does everyone see why soft skills are so important?
7. Why is teamwork and communication so important in school, sport, friends, and family?



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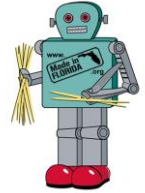




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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

1. Learning Challenges: <http://fl-ate.pbwiki.com> (username and password required)
2. Made in Florida: <http://www.madeinflorida.org>
3. Virtual Tours: http://www.madeinflorida.org/virtual_tours.htm
4. Educational Pathways: <http://www.madeinflorida.org/Pathways.htm>

Sample Orders – you can continue on with the exercise by using the sample orders below or come up with dimensions on your own.

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



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