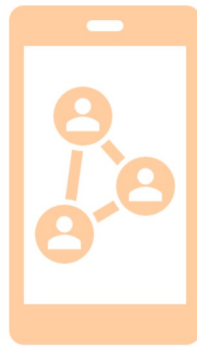# Social Essentials

Lesson Two: Word Choice

Did you know?

Most teens use social media and have a smartphone, and nearly half say they're online almost constantly.

According to Pew Research Center survey of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 conducted Sep - Oct 2024.

Neurodiverse teens may struggle with communication skills, which can lead to increased risk on social media.

However, opting out of social media can isolate neurodiverse teens from their peers.

This lesson will help neurodiverse students learn to represent tone in social media content so they can better interact with others online.

Lesson Summary:

Students will analyze social media posts and determine word choice dictates tone.

Students will then create both positive and negative social media posts.

For Educators:

Subjects

- English
- Health

Key Terms

- Word choice
- Tone
- Diction (optional)

Blooms

- Create
- Evaluate
- Analyze
- Apply

Behaviors

- Worksheet
- Discussion

For Counselors:

Key Terms

- Communication
- Positive interaction
- Personal safety

Academic

- Effective communication
- Accomplishing academic goals

Career

- Developing positive interactions
- Preparing to work in group settings

Social/Personal

- Developing self-knowledge
- Developing technology personal safety

Goal: Students will analyze how their attitude is expressed through social media text and be aware of word choice and tone when writing.

Materials: Paper | Pencil/Pens | Worksheet

Tricks & Tips: Draw a T-chart visible to the class. Write down a list of words with the same meaning that have different tones.
For example, try: determined/stubborn, smart/clever, brave/reckless

Hook and Connect:

Split students into pairs. Each pair will have an "unfortunately" and a "fortunately" student. The "unfortunately" student will give a negative scenario, and the "fortunately" student will make the situation positive.

Pick a volunteer and demonstrate using this script:
Teacher: Unfortunately, it began to rain.
Student: Fortunately, I had an umbrella for the rain.
Teacher: Unfortunately, the umbrella had a hole.
Student: Fortunately, I also had a rain jacket.
Each sentence began with either "fortunately" or "unfortunately." How do you think **these words** affected the **tone** of the sentence?

Read out loud: *Today's lesson is about **word choice** and how it changes the overall **feeling (tone)** of the message.*

Guided Practice:

Share a personal (or fictional) story with the class using negative words and absolutes (e.g. never, forever, always, etc.). Then tell the story again using words with a positive **tone** and **word choice**. List some positive and negative words on the board. Emphasize how **word choice** determines the **tone**.

Activity:

Break students into pairs or groups and complete worksheet **1A.**
Remind students to highlight or underline negative and positive words in the worksheet. Students will then share their worksheet within their pair/group or with the class.

Discussion:

Lead a discussion with the students. Here are some essential questions to facilitate the discussion:

- How does **word choice** compare between talking in person and on social media/via text?
- What kind of **consequences** could happen because of poor word choice?
- Are we **responsible** for how others may misinterpret our messages? Why or why not?
- How does **word choice** impact our **relationships** and **self image**? Could our word choice influence our **self esteem**?

Today's Culture:

In today's culture, the internet remembers, quickly repeats, and rarely forgives. Social media awareness is a form of social skill needed in today's culture to prevent stressful social situations.

Explore:

Suggest students look through real social media posts or text messages (their own if possible) and have them practice transforming the negative posts into positive ones.

Author's Notes:

Students are surrounded by technology and are increasingly having less face-to-face interaction. What could be recognized as sarcasm in person can easily be taken at face value in text.

The elementary age group can seem too early to be teaching social media skills. However, students are gaining access to technology at younger ages, even in school. It's important to teach how their words will affect their relationships with others.

While watching words can't prevent every pitfall in social media, it does teach students a lifelong lesson in text word choice and perspective in writing.

Life's an adventure.

Let's make it a great one!

Name:_____ Date:_____ Class:_____

Directions:

Circle if the message is positive or negative. Then underline keywords that determine the tone. Finally, rewrite the social media posts and texts in the opposite tone.

I MESSED UP JUST LIKE ALWAYS. UGH. WHY DO I BOTHER? **Negative** or **Positive**	
	Negative or **Positive**
👤 She's so smart! I could learn a lot from her. **Negative** or **Positive**	👤

Directions:

Make up your own negative example, then rewrite it with a positive tone. After, explain the possible negative outcome that could occur from the message's negative tone.

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