

15 Seconds to Politeness

Overview

This is a timed interactive game that could be played with a small or large group. It is recommended that you play it in class after you focus on how best to deliver negative news. You should spend some time discussing what constitutes **negative language** and how word choice and tone of voice (sometimes misconstrued in e-mail and other written messages) contribute to negativity in some instances. You should also discuss how words alone do not constitute the source of negativity in every instance. In other words, changing a negative word to a positive one doesn't always create the positive tone we hope for, so by sharing examples and having a discussion, students will learn to pay attention to key elements of positive communication.

In this game, the instructor starts out by reading or uttering something negative, and students have 20 seconds to rephrase what they hear—that is, to identify the source of the negativity, and to restate in a **positive manner** the negative sound, word, phrase, sentence or paragraph shared. When the game starts, you randomly select and read aloud each example of negative language. The first student to raise their hand gets called on first to provide a suitable equivalent. If (s)he is unable to provide a positive and synonymous equivalent, the next person to raise their hand is called upon to share their thoughts. If they too provide an unsatisfactory response to the piece of language the teacher read out, then the next person to raise their hand is called. If two or more students raise their hands simultaneously, then they each get to read out their recommended renditions and to earn the point(s) allocated for that round. Their classmates could serve as judges.