



## Learning Activity – Paraphrasing

Paraphrase the following instructions.

Plant the bulbs in staggered rows and then back-fill the holes and fertilize. Only plant 200, even though there are more to go in. Use the landscape fabric because we've had trouble with weeds in this bed. Make sure to cut the X spots on the fabric in the right spots.

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The material in the above section was created by Community Literacy of Ontario and the Tri-County Literacy Council (based on Curriculum originally produced by Literacy Link Eastern Ontario). These organizations have given their permission for Landscape Ontario to use this material.

## Non-Verbal Communication Skills

Words are important, but they are only part of the communication puzzle. We communicate a lot – intentionally and unintentionally – with facial expressions, eye contact and body language. An important part of non-verbal communication is recognizing that these things often tell people just as much – or more – than the words we are actually saying.

Recognizing key non-verbal cues in ourselves and others is a great first step to making sure that we communicate effectively with others both in and outside the workplace.

## Soft Skills

### Attitude

Attitude is a feeling or emotion toward a fact, a state or a person. It is a way of thinking that is reflected in your actions. Those actions can be conveyed through your voice, facial expression and body language. In a work environment, it is important that you keep a positive attitude about yourself, others and your job.

Attitude affects the way you approach any situation. It's important that you show people that you can work well with your supervisor and other members of your crew. If you respect and cooperate with others, they will be the same way with you.



### Appearance

Employers in this industry know that working outside can be dirty work. Moving sod, cutting brick and kneeling in soil all day can be hard on your appearance. Working in the hot sun can also leave you feeling a little less than fresh. Having said that, it's important that you start your day off right. Show up for work in clean clothes, showered and ready to go. Remember, your job is outdoors, and you will be seen by members of the public and company customers. If you look untidy and sloppy, people may think your work will be untidy and sloppy too. Unfair as it is, you are often judged on your appearance, so make a good impression.

### Show Up on Time

One of the biggest complaints employers have is workers not showing up on time, or not showing up at all. The best thing you can do for yourself as an employee is to show up on time. Even better, showing up 15 minutes early is a good practice to develop. Arriving on time or a few minutes early shows your boss that you are responsible, considerate and that you value your job. Lateness sends a negative message to your employer. Lateness tells your employer that you don't really care about your job. It might not be true, but it will cross your employer's mind. Remember, there are a lot of people standing in line behind you, waiting for their chance to show your employer how dedicated they are.

### Be Willing to Learn

In an entry-level position, employers don't expect you to come with all the skills you need, but they do expect you to come with a willingness to learn.

### How do you show willingness to learn?

#### Ask questions

- "How do you know when to...?"
- "Why does the ...?"
- "How much do I ...?"

Asking questions isn't a bad thing. A lot of people don't ask questions when they need to or when they should. Asking questions is an excellent way to learn!

#### Read more about it

There are many books, magazines, websites and television shows about landscaping and gardening. Sometimes learning more about a subject makes the subject more interesting.

#### Take courses or training

Keep upgrading your skills. If there is something you'd like to learn about, ask someone to show you, or ask where you could find the information. Your coworkers are a valuable resource in helping you learn more. Don't be afraid to ask them for help, advice or information.





### Work Hard

Employers pay you to work. That's the bottom line. They don't pay you to stand around looking for something to do. Dig in and do whatever it takes to get the job done. There is a difference between hard work and working hard. Working in the landscaping and grounds maintenance field is hard work. In the summer, it's dirty, hot, sweaty work. In the winter, it's cold, uncomfortable work. Your muscles hurt. You push, pull, carry, drag, dig, pound and bend all day. Your body is a tool to get the job done.

Working hard means that you take your job seriously and you give 100% all the time. You arrive on time and start work immediately. You work until you are given a break. You don't extend your breaks longer than they are supposed to be. You get back to work and give it your all. You work hard right up until your shift is over.

### Anticipate What Needs to be Done Next

Employers want you to anticipate what needs to be done. If you finish the task you are given, look around for something else to do. If you are unsure as to whether your boss wants you to do it, just quickly ask: "I see the shipment of annuals has come in, do you want me to water them?" Offering suggestions like this will make your employer's job easier. They don't have to stop and think about what task to assign you next.

