



Giving Compliments, Accepting Compliments

Students frequently have difficulties both giving and accepting compliments. Many students feel that a person who gives them a compliment is not being “for real,” so they do not accept compliments graciously. When students do not know how to give a compliment or cannot do so comfortably, they often will try to give an inappropriate “backhanded” compliment that the person who is receiving the compliment either ignores or takes in a negative way.

The goal of the lesson is to help build positive relationships in the classroom and school building by providing students with the appropriate behavioral expectations for the skills of “Giving Compliments” and “Accepting Compliments.”

The objectives of the lesson for students include:

- learning the steps of the skills of “Giving Compliments” and “Accepting Compliments.”
- practicing the skills.
- distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate compliments.

Materials

Index cards

Introduce the Skill

Ask students the following questions.

- How many of you like to receive compliments? Why? How does it make you feel?
- Is it ever difficult to accept a compliment? Have you ever responded to a compliment by saying something like, “It’s no big deal,” or “I guess it is all right”? Why do you do this?
- Have any of you ever given a compliment? Why do you give compliments? How do you feel when someone ignores or doesn’t accept your compliment?

NOTE: You might choose to separate this lesson into two separate lessons, one for “Giving Compliments” and one for “Accepting Compliments.”

SAY: “Compliments not only make people feel good, but also make our classroom and school a more friendly and welcoming place to be. However, there is a right way to give a compliment and there is an appropriate way to accept a compliment. When we forget these rules, a couple of things can happen. Either a person doesn’t give a compliment sincerely, and it doesn’t feel as good to receive it, or the person receiving the compliment doesn’t accept it appropriately, which can make the person who gave the compliment feel bad. The second situation might lead to fewer compliments being given.”

SAY: “Let’s start with ‘Giving Compliments.’ Here are the steps of that skill.”

Describe the Appropriate Behavior

Provide students with the behavioral steps of the skill “Giving Compliments.”

NOTE: Steps can be posted on a bulletin board or shown on an overhead, etc. Please adapt the steps to fit your expectations and the needs of your students.

1. **Look at the person.**
2. **Speak with a clear, enthusiastic voice.**
3. **Praise the other person’s quality, activity, or project specifically by telling him or her exactly what you like about it.**
4. **Use words such as “That was great,” “Wonderful,” or “That was awesome.”**
5. **Give the other person time to respond to your compliment.**

ASK: “Are there any questions about any of these steps?” (Allow students time to respond.)

SAY: “Now let’s talk about ‘Accepting Compliments.’ Here are the steps of that skill.”

1. **Look at the person.**
2. **Use a pleasant voice.**
3. **Say “Thank you.”**

ASK: “Are there any questions about any of these steps?” (Allow students time to respond.)

SAY: “These are the steps we are going to use for the skills of ‘Giving Compliments’ and ‘Accepting Compliments’ in this class and building.”

Give a Reason

Ask the students to provide reasons for why they think it might be important to give and accept compliments using these steps. Here are some examples of reasons to use in case students have difficulty thinking of ones on their own:

- Other people might be more accepting of criticism if you have complimented them in the past.
- Compliments make people feel better.
- Accepting compliments lets other people know you care about how they feel about you.

Practice

Choose one or more of the following activities to complete your lesson by allowing the students to practice the skill.

1. **Card Activity** (Adapted from “Blue Cards” by Chris Cavert in *Games for Teachers*)

- Pass out index cards and have each student put his or her name at the top of the card (or write students’ names on the cards prior to class).
- Collect the cards and shuffle them.
- Pass the cards out to the students and ask each student to write a sincere compliment about the person whose name is at the top of the card.

NOTE: You may choose to allow superficial comments (e.g., “I like the key chain on your backpack”) or you may challenge your students to write compliments that contain more substance (e.g., “I appreciated

the way you helped me out in math class last week”), depending on the skill level of your students. You might also want to monitor for compliments that are inappropriate (e.g., sexual comments, anything that might make another person uncomfortable, a compliment for an inappropriate behavior, etc.).

- Once students have written a compliment on the card, ask each one to read his or her compliment out loud to the person whose name is on the card. Remind students of the steps for giving and accepting compliments.

2. Journaling ideas

- Ask students to write about a time when they gave a compliment and the person did not accept the compliment. Have them describe how that made them feel.
- Ask students to write about a time they accepted a compliment and how they thought it made the other person feel.
- Ask students to write about a time they did not accept a compliment, the result of behaving that way, and how they would behave differently now.

3. Literature connections:

Reading students a book that addresses a particular problem is a great way to start class discussions. The following books for pre-elementary-aged and elementary-aged children are related to giving and accepting compliments.

- *Charlotte’s Web*, E.B. White (3rd-6th, ages 9-12)
- *Daniel’s Duck*, Clyde Robert Bulla (K-3rd)
- *Sticks and Stones: Social Skill: Giving Compliments*, Carol Cummings (K-6th)
- *I Love You the Purplest*, Barbara M. Joesse (PreK-3rd)
- *I Like Your Buttons*, Sarah Marwil Lamstein (PreK-3rd)

4. Role-play for the appropriateness of compliments.

SAY: “Everyone loves to hear a sincere compliment for something that they have done well. But as much as we like to hear compliments, some do not make us feel good, others are inappropriate for school, and some are illegal (e.g., sexual harassment). Let’s see if we can sort out the differences.”

- Write the following statements on the blackboard, poster board, or overhead and review them with the students.

Appropriate compliments:

- are sincere (e.g., not sarcastic)
 - are respectful (e.g., nonsexual)
 - praise appropriate behaviors and positive qualities (e.g., don't praise putting someone down)
 - do not overstep personal boundaries (e.g., consider your age, relationship with the person, gender, etc.)
- Provide the students with several examples of compliments and ask them to come to a consensus on whether the compliment is appropriate or inappropriate. Here are some examples; ask students to contribute others.

“Those are really cool jeans.”

“You look good in those jeans.”

“Mrs. Jackson, you look hot in that dress.” (to a teacher)

“Good one.” (after a “put down”)

“You are a really good listener.”

“Nice shirt.” (sarcastically)

“Cute skirt.” (boy to a girl)

“Cute skirt.” (girl to a girl)

“You explained this really well, Mr. B. I think I've got it now.” (to your favorite teacher)

“You explained this really well, Mr. C. I think I've got it now.” (to an adult you don't know very well)

“You look great in that sweater.” (to your best friend)

“You look great in that sweater.” (to an acquaintance)

SAY: “Thank you for completing the practice activity. We will continue to discuss the skills of ‘Giving Compliments’ and ‘Accepting Compliments’ for the rest of the week.”

NOTE: Each day of the week, review the steps of the skills, discuss why it is important to use the skills, and practice when possible.

Giving Compliments

- 1. Look at the person.**
- 2. Speak with a clear and enthusiastic voice.**
- 3. Praise the other person's quality, activity, or project specifically by telling him or her exactly what you like about it.**
- 4. Use words such as "That was great," "Wonderful," or "That was awesome."**
- 5. Give the other person time to respond to your compliment.**

Accepting Compliments

1. Look at the person.

2. Use a pleasant voice.

3. Say "Thank you."