**Independent Activities
 *Engaging with Others***
Note: If you see a word you do not know and it has a ^ next to it, you can look at the glossary on the final page of this document. You can also use a dictionary ([www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com)).
 **Athletes:** You can use this training on your own or with personal support. Print out and fill in answers to the questions or type your answers into the Word document. Go through these trainings at your own speed.

**In this course, you will:**

1. Learn what makes an effective^ team
2. Practice effective teamwork
3. Identify how you can be an effective^ team leader
4. Learn why it is important to understand all opinions on a topic
5. Lean what “pros” and “cons” are
6. Learn how to engage^ others even when you disagree with them
7. Learn how to apply all the lessons to you personally

| **Topic** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| **Lesson 1: Characteristics of an effective**^ **team*** My experience on a team
* What makes good teams “good?”
 | Think about your experience on a team -- what went well? What could be improved? How did you help your team be successful? What are characteristics of an effective team? |
| **Lesson 2: Engaging all opinions*** Problem solving as a team
* Making sure everyone has a say
 | When discussing a topic as a team, you will find that there are many different opinions. Practice looking at all options and forming a solution in which all sides might agree. |
| **Lesson 3: Developing my skills*** Thinking about my skills
* Becoming a more effective team leader
 | Assess your own ability to work with individuals and be an effective team leader then identify ways to improve your skills. |

Updated: June 2021

**Engaging with Others: Lesson 1**

***Characteristics of an effective team***

**What are characteristics?**

***Characteristics are traits***^ ***or qualities***^ ***of people, places, or things. They describe the way something looks, acts, thinks, and more. Simply put, characteristics help describe things.***

Good leaders have certain things they do that make them good at leading teams. Some characteristics that good teams have, include: Healthy conflict, diversity, shared leadership, positive atmosphere, open and clear communication, clearly defined roles, a common goal, and collaboration.

Some of those words or terms may be new to you. Take some time to think about what they might mean. Read through the definitions in the right column on the next page and draw a line to the definition on the left that you think it fits with. **We did one for you already so you can see how it should work. Remember the answers are on Page 4 if you want to check your work after you are finished.**

***Good Characteristics Definitions/Descriptions***

Everyone knows what they want to do and are working together to accomplish^ it. Helps the team know when they have been successful^.

Team members are open to share their thoughts and opinions at any time. If the information is difficult to understand, accommodations^ are made so everyone can participate.



Members are comfortable taking risks and if mistakes are made, they learn from them and move on. Members trust one another, and are willing to be open, ask for help, and give support.



Every member on the team has a role to play. The best teams find a way to put people in positions where they will succeed. Team members share responsibilities to make the team successful^.



Team members work together to accomplish^ big goals. They use their skills, knowledge, and expertise to improve their work. Team members leave their ego^ out of decisions; it is about what is best for the group as a whole!

This helps the team make sure that problems are addressed in a supportive and healthy manner to achieve goals. Conflict can be scary, but the best leaders and the best teams use healthy conflict to grow and be better.



Everyone has different skills, experiences, and thoughts, that allow the team to be effective^. Everyone is celebrated for what they bring to the team!



This helps team members understand their role. A team can work better together when people know exactly what they are supposed to do.



***Characteristics Definitions/Descriptions***

Everyone knows what they want to do and are working together to accomplish^ it. Helps the team know when they have been successful^.

Team members are open to share their thoughts and opinions at any time. If the information is difficult to understand, accommodations^ are made so everyone can participate.



Members are comfortable taking risks and if mistakes are made, they learn from them and move on. Members trust one another, and are willing to be open, ask for help, and give support.



Every member on the team has a role to play. The best teams find a way to put people in positions where they will succeed. Team members share responsibilities to make the team successful^.



Team members work together to accomplish^ big goals. They use their skills, knowledge, and expertise to improve their work. Team members leave their ego^ out of decisions; it is about what is best for the group as a whole!

Everyone has different skills, experiences, and thoughts, that allow the team to be effective. Everyone is celebrated for what they bring to the team!



This helps team members understand their role. A team can work better together when people know exactly what they are supposed to do.

This helps the team make sure that problems are addressed in a supportive and healthy manner to achieve goals. Conflict can be scary, but the best leaders and the best teams use healthy conflict to grow and be better.

***Reflection Worksheet***

**Note:** Do not feel like you need to complete all these questions at the same time. Take your time! If you need more space to answer your questions, use a separate sheet of paper or another Word document.

Think about a team you have been part of in the past or are a part of now that you think is a good team and has some of the characteristics mentioned above. It can be a sports team or a group working on a project at school or in your community. Then answer the following questions about that team.

1. What team are you thinking of?
2. What did you like about being on that team?
3. Using the characteristics of an effective^ team above, what do you think was your team’s strongest characteristic? Why?
4. Using the characteristics of an effective^ team above, what do you think was your team’s weakest characteristic? Why?
5. Who were the “leaders” of this team? Were they nominated or elected to be the leaders, or did they just start leading and everyone followed them (or was it something else)? What did these leaders do to make sure your team stayed focused and effective^? What did you learn from them?
6. How did you help your team be successful^? What did you do? Be detailed.
7. What could you have done better as a member of the team? If this team is in the past, and you could do it over again, what would you do differently to help the team? If you are currently still on this team, what can you do to help your team achieve its goals now?
8. After reviewing the characteristics of an effective^ team above, which characteristic do you think is most important for an effective^ team? There is no right or wrong answer; it is what you think is most important. Why did you select that characteristic?
9. Share the list of characteristics of an effective^ team with a peer, mentor, or family member. Tell them which one you thought was most important and why. Ask them which one they think is most important and why?

**<< END OF LESSON 1 >>**

**Engaging with Others: Lesson 2
 *Engaging all Opinions***

**Pros and cons**

When working on a team, it is important to explore/learn about all sides of a topic before making a decision. This means that people should be willing^ to research and think about things they do not agree with.

Everyone has opinions about things. Some topics we may feel strongly about, while others we may not really care about that much. Remember that a topic you do not care about could be a topic that is very important to someone else.

It is important to keep calm when you are having a conversation with people who have strong opinions on a topic. It is also important to try and see things from their point of view. You do not always have to agree with other people. But knowing what they think and why they think that will help you understand their position. It will also help you work with them in the future.

The best leaders…

* Are great at having conversations with people that disagree with them.
* Are greatlisteners. They let that person share their opinion before offering their own.
* Show respect for people they disagree with and try to put themselves in the other person’s shoes to see why they may think that way.
* Take the time to research the other opinions on a topic that are different from their own.
* Are open to changing their mind on a topic.

This is a difficult skill to perfect, but with practice, learning how to look at all sides of a topic will help you become a leader who is comfortable having difficult conversations and eventually making difficult decisions.

Let us practice!

1. Pick one of the following topics or come up with your own. If you come up with your own topic, keep in mind it should be written as a statement, NOT a question.
	* Special Olympics athletes should not be allowed to participate in more than one World Games in their career.
	* Special Olympics should charge athletes a small fee to participate so the organization can reach even more athletes.
	* Schools should get rid of homework completely.
2. Using the topic you selected, complete the pro/con chart on the Page 10. Consider all sides of the topic and list reasons that support each position.
	* Anything you write in the “pro” section means that, in your opinion, it is a benefit or a good result from the topic you are discussing^
		1. For example, if the topic is “Should unhealthy food be banned from schools?” a pro for that is that students would be eating healthier foods every day, which is good for overall health.
	* Anything you write in the “con” section means that, in your opinion, it is a bad result from the topic you are discussing^
		1. For example, if the topic is “Should unhealthy food be banned from schools?” a con for that would be that it is forcing students to eat something they may not like.
	* Write as many pros as possible that you can think of for the topic that you chose. Then write as many cons as possible that you can think of for the topic.
3. Without sharing what you wrote down for your pros and cons, discuss the topic with a peer, mentor, or family member and have them write down their pros and cons for the topic on a separate sheet. Compare your notes and see where you agreed and disagreed. Did they have something down as a “pro” that you had listed as a “con?” Each of you should take the time to share why you feel that way.
4. After exploring all sides of the topic, brainstorm^ or think about a possible solution in which all sides might come to a compromise^.
5. Complete the reflection questions.

### Pro/Con Chart

Use this Pro/Con Chart to consider at least two sides of the topic you chose. Remember that something you think is a “pro” could be a “con” for someone else. We all have different opinions, and if those opinions do not hurt other people, then a healthy debate on a topic and giving space for people to share those opinions is a good thing. If you want to repeat this exercise with other topics, you can easily make a chart like this on the other side of this paper or on a separate sheet of paper.

|  |
| --- |
| **Topic:**  |
| **Pro** | **Con** |
|  |  |
| **Possible Solution:** |

***Reflection Worksheet***

**Note:** Do not feel like you need to complete all these questions at the same time. Take your time! If you need more space to answer your questions, use a separate sheet of paper or another Word document.

1. Why do you think it is important to think about all sides of a topic?
2. What was difficult about exploring all sides of your topic?
3. After exploring the pros and cons, did your first opinion of the topic change at all?
4. How do you think you can use this skill as a leader?
5. When you shared your list of pros and cons with your peer, mentor, or family member, were there any things listed in your pro column that they had in their con column? Take the time to talk about why each of you felt that way. How did that conversation make you feel? There is no wrong answer here.
6. How did your possible solution to the topic compare to the possible solution your peer, mentor, or family member came up with? Do you like theirs better or yours? Why?
7. Did you find yourself doing research on a topic to learn more about it? Did anything surprise you about this activity?

**<< END OF LESSON 2 >>**

**Engaging with Others: Lesson 3**

***Developing your own skills***

**Reflection Questions**

**Note**: Do not feel like you need to complete all these questions at the same time. Take your time! If you need more space to answer your questions, use a separate sheet of paper or another Word document.

Review what you learned from Lessons 1 and 2 by answering the questions below.

1. Review the characteristics^ of an effective^ team in Lesson 1. Which characteristic(s) ^ do you think is **your** strongest? Why?
2. Which characteristics^ do you think you can improve? Why? How do you plan to do that?
3. Think of the team you used for the reflection questions in Lesson 1. If you had to do it all over again and **you** were now leading this team, what would you want to do? Would you lead it differently?
4. You are on a committee planning the Opening Ceremony for your next competition. At your first meeting, people are having their own conversations and there is no plan for the meeting. What 2-3 characteristics^ from Lesson 1 would you focus on to help get the committee and meeting on track? What steps would you take to lead this group?
5. You are at a meeting and a Special Olympics staff member asks you and a couple of other athletes’ questions about how to improve your program. You look around the room and notice that all the athletes look like you (they are the same age, the same gender, the same race, the same ability level). What characteristic from Lesson 1 is missing here? What would you do to solve this problem?
6. You serve on a committee of athletes that is often asked by Special Olympics staff for feedback on potential changes to competitions (usually called an Athlete Leadership Council).

A staff member asks your committee to help them. To save money, your local Special Olympics wants to stop serving meals at competitions.

As a member of the Athlete Leadership Council, it is your job to discuss this potential change and let the staff know the opinion of your fellow athletes.

Using what you learned in Lesson 2, how would your committee gather feedback from others and make a recommendation to the staff? What role would you play in this exercise? What are your own thoughts on the idea? If it helps, make a pros and cons list.

***Note****:* For these next questions, you will need a mentor, team member, coach, family member, or staff member, to talk to. You are going to ask them what they think of you, and you will share what you think of them. This exercise may be uncomfortable for some people; that is okay. Being able to give and receive constructive feedback^ is needed to become a better leader.

1. Share the characteristics^ of an effective^ team from Lesson 2 with a team member or mentor and then ask which characteristics^ they think is your strength and which characteristic^ they think are weaknesses/possible areas of improvement for you. What did they say?
2. Ask them if they have any suggestions for how to improve the characteristics^ you are not good at. What did they say?
3. Ask them if it is okay for you to share what **you** think **they** could improve. This might also be awkward^ for you to give constructive feedback^ on someone else, but good leaders are able to recognize^ when teammates struggle with something and they want to help others get better at things. What did you come up with for things **they** could improve?
4. Were some of the things **you** are good at, things **they** are also **not** good at? If so, what ones?
5. Were some of the things **they** are good at, things **you** are **not** good at? If so, what ones? How could they help you get better at those things?
6. How does knowing these things help you become a better leader and work together as a team?
7. Put a plan together to help them to improve those things. What is your plan for them? Were they open to making those changes and to your plan? Helping other people improve is a great characteristic^ of good leaders and it can help you improve yourself as well!
8. Was it easier for you to receive constructive feedback^ or to give it to someone else? For the part that you felt was easier, why do you think it was easier? For the part that you felt was harder, why do you think it was harder?

**<< END OF LESSON 3 >>**

**Glossary/Dictionary**

*It is okay if you do not know what a word means. This glossary (also known as a short dictionary) is supposed to help you learn new words and how to use them. Some of these words have more than one meaning. The definitions below relate to how the words are used in this document only. If there are other words in this lesson that you do not understand, try looking them up online at* [*www.m-w.com*](http://www.m-w.com)*.*Lesson 1:

1. ***Accomplish:*** to reach a goal; to complete something
2. ***Adaptations:*** something to make someone’s life or job easier
3. ***Contribution:*** the giving of something that is important to make something happen
4. ***Creatively:*** done with imagination; “thinking outside the box”
5. ***Ego:*** your conscious mind; your “self”; if someone says a person has a “big ego” it means they are full of themselves and they think they are never wrong; someone with a “big ego” usually tries to make themselves the center or attention
6. ***Productively:*** good at getting results
7. ***Qualities:*** similar to **Traits**; something that describes someone or something
8. ***Successful:*** to be good at something
9. ***Traits:*** similar to **Qualities**; something that describes someone or something

----------------------------
Lesson 2:

1. ***Brainstorm:*** think about; come up with
2. ***Compromise:*** a decision that multiple people with different opinions can agree on; it’s a decision that isn’t perfect for everyone, but usually is just barely good enough for everyone that an agreement is made
3. ***Discussing:*** talking about
4. ***Engage:*** talk to; work with
5. ***Willing:*** ready; interested in; to prompt an action

-----------------------

Lesson 3:

1. ***Awkward:*** like **Uncomfortable**; scary or weird/not normal feeling; out of your comfort zone; sometimes painfully uncomfortable
2. ***Characteristic:*** a quality that describes someone or their actions
3. ***Constructive Feedback:*** sharing of an opinion that might be **Uncomfortable** or **Awkward**, but done in a way to help someone get better at something.
4. ***Effective:*** good; competent
5. ***Recognize:*** see; notice
6. ***Uncomfortable:*** similar to **Awkward**; feeling uneasy or out of comfort

**Please complete the** [**Training Evaluation Form**](https://specialolympics.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5cZHOzU0qemAkDP)**:**

You can also access the evaluation form by typing this link into your browser (it is case-sensitive!): <https://bit.ly/2SrjVNG> or by taking a picture of the QR code with your phone.