

## **Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Communication at School**

**Passive Communication:** Prioritizes others' needs over their own, often leading to being taken advantage of.

**Aggressive Communication:** Prioritizes one's own needs over others, often leading to conflict and disrespect.

**Assertive Communication:** Balances one's own needs with the needs of others, promoting mutual respect and understanding.

### **Teaching Assertiveness**

**The “nice no”:** Students and teachers may feel pressured to go along with other people's ideas or invitations. Examples include: “Do you want to trade snacks?” and “Do you want to co-plan this lesson?”

These invitations can cause anxiety if we want to decline them. A simple technique for responding assertively to such requests is a “nice no.” We might say, with a smile, “Thanks for asking me, but I'm not interested.” Sometimes a simple “No, thanks” does the trick. Making a counter suggestion often works as a follow-up to a nice no.

**Setting a boundary:** Sometimes students are asked by peers to do things that are outside their comfort zone, such as “Will you let me cut in line?” or “Can I copy off your paper?” An assertive technique for responding to such invitations is to set a clear and firm boundary by saying, “No, I'm not comfortable with that.” Students don't need to explain why or negotiate about it—they can simply set a clear boundary and hold to it.

**Asking for some thinking time:** People sometimes ask us questions that we're not ready to answer. We might need more information, a chance to weigh other options, or time to reflect on our feelings about the situation. An assertive technique for responding to such questions is to ask for some thinking time: “I'm not sure how to answer that right now. Can I get back to you later today?” A key point is to ask for the amount of time we need, whether it's later the same day or next week.

**Stating your needs:** We sometimes run into misunderstandings because we haven't communicated our own needs clearly. It may seem that other people are ignoring or disrespecting our needs when in fact they're simply not aware of them. If we recognize this, we can address the problem by stating our needs calmly. For example, a student might say to a peer, “I need space to hang my coat in the closet.” And a student might say to a

teacher, "Could you please repeat that? I need to hear the directions again."

**Using an "I feel" message:** Sometimes we have misunderstandings that are more personal. If we feel hurt by someone we're close to, we may respond by being aggressive, making an accusation, or withdrawing passively to protect ourselves. But with friends, teachers, and colleagues who care about us, students and teachers can use an "I feel" message to assertively communicate their feelings and emotional needs. A student may say to a friend, "I feel sad when you cancel our plans, because I love hanging out with you." This gives the friend a chance to understand the speaker's needs and try to meet them.

**Knowing how to respond to aggression:** Sometimes when we communicate assertively, we're met with an aggressive response that might diminish the validity of our feelings or perspective. The best thing to do in this situation may be to calmly remove ourselves from the conversation by saying something like, "I think I communicated my thoughts clearly, so there's not much more to talk about."

Summary - Assertiveness
1. The Nice No
2. Setting a Boundary
3. Asking for some thinking time
4. "I feel" message
5. Knowing how to respond to aggression

Scenarios next page

<b>Scenario</b>	Your friend asks if you could help him with his/her work. However, you are too busy and can't do it.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

<b>Scenario</b>	A classmate frequently asks for help but doesn't participate in solving problems.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

<b>Scenario</b>	You see that a group member is not contributing to a group presentation. Making everybody demotivated and anxious about the presentation and causing you to have to put up extra work.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

<b>Scenario</b>	Your group and you cannot agree on a topic for a project, everyone wants to focus on a different issue.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

<b>Scenario</b>	A student asks if you will let them cut in line.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

<b>Scenario</b>	A classmate asks if they can copy off your paper.
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Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

<b>Scenario</b>	A classmate makes fun of your comments during class discussions.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

<b>Scenario</b>	A classmate constantly talks about unrelated stuff during group work, making it hard to concentrate..
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

<b>Scenario</b>	A classmate leads the conversation and starts giving everyone instructions with what to do without hearing what the others want.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

SCENARIOS FOR PRINTING (FEEL FREE TO TAILOR THESE TO  
YOUR NEEDS)

Your friend asks if you could help him with his/her work.

However, you are too busy and can't do it.

You see that a group member is not contributing to a group presentation. Making everybody demotivated and anxious about the presentation and causing you to have to put up extra work.

A classmate frequently asks for help but doesn't participate in solving problems.

Your group and you cannot agree on a topic for a project, everyone wants to focus on a different issue.

A student asks if you will let them cut in line.

A classmate asks if they can copy off your paper.

A classmate makes fun of your comments during class discussions.

A classmate frequently doesn't show up for group project meetings, leaving you to do most of the work.

A classmate constantly talks about unrelated stuff during group work, making it hard to concentrate.

A classmate leads the conversation and starts giving everyone instructions with what to do without hearing what the others want.