

# Soft Skills Sleuths



# ATTITUDE

FOR REVIEW ONLY



## INVESTIGATING LIFE SKILLS SUCCESS

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# What Are Soft Skills and Why Do I Need Them?

**Skills** are needed to succeed at any job you can imagine. Different jobs require different skills. Professional baseball players need good batting and catching skills. Brain surgeons need steady hands and lots of practice with a scalpel. These are examples of **hard skills** necessary to do specific jobs.

Everyone needs "**soft skills**" to succeed in life. Soft skills get personal. They are about how you behave and treat people. Soft skills are the skills you need to be the very best *you* at home, work, and school.

"Sounds good," you say. "But I don't have a job. Why do I need to worry about soft skills?"

Ahh, but you do have a job. In fact, you have a very important job. You are a student, and your job is to learn as much as you can. Learning soft skills makes you a better student now. It also gets you ready to succeed in any career you choose later.

**Attitude** is a way of feeling or acting toward a person, thing, or situation. Your attitude is expressed not only in the things you say and do. It also shows in the way you say and do things. Your attitude shows, and it affects the people around you. Having a good attitude is a choice you make every day.

In this book, you get to be a soft skills **sleuth**. You will track down clues about what having a good (and not so good!) attitude looks like. You will **investigate** four soft skill qualities having to do with attitude:

- **Courteous**
- **Confident**
- **Positive**
- **Responsible**

# Why Do I Need Them?

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Here's how you can be a soft skills sleuth. In each chapter:

- Gather the facts.** Read the description about the soft skill.
- Read the case file.** Check out a situation where soft skills are needed.
- Investigate the case.** Look for clues showing soft skills successes and soft skills mistakes. Keep track of the clues on a blank sheet of paper.
- Crack the case.** Did you spot all the clues?



# SOFT SKILL #1

# COURTEOUS



Courtesy and kindness go hand in hand. If you do something kind, it is also **courteous**. If you do something courteous, it is also kind. It's two good things for the price of one!

Every day you will find lots of ways to be courteous. It starts with the morning rush at home. Everyone is dashing around, trying to get out the door. How can you show a courteous attitude? Maybe it's helping your sister find her shoes. Maybe it's surprising your parent by packing *their* lunch for a change.

Courtesy doesn't stop at home. Take it with you wherever you go. It is always welcome on the school bus, in your classroom, and at all the activities that make up your day. A courteous attitude puts other people first. It is the opposite of a rude, selfish attitude.

Courtesy means going out of your way to make the day better for someone else. It doesn't matter how big or small your action is. Once you pick up the courtesy habit, you will find many opportunities to practice **random** acts of kindness that perk up your day-to-day life. Courtesy is an attitude booster. It lifts the spirits of everyone it touches.

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## SOFT SKILLS CASE # 1: COURTEOUS

It's the school dance. It's an exciting and nerve-racking experience for all! A little courtesy goes a long way in making this fun for everyone. **Can you spot acts of kindness that are putting the students at ease? Is anyone making it harder for others to enjoy themselves? Dance on over to the next page and let your investigation begin.**

## Random Acts of Kindness

- Sit next to the new kid at lunch.
- Pick up litter around your school.
- Write a thank-you note to your teacher.
- Set the table for dinner without being asked.
- Offer to help rake your neighbor's leaves or shovel their sidewalk.
- Spend time with your grandparents.



"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."  
—Aesop

**DO:**  
Investigate courteous successes and mistakes!

**DO NOT:**  
Write in this book!



Where is courtesy making the rounds on the dance floor?  
Who needs a reminder to chill out and be courteous?

THEY COULD HAVE DANCED ALL NIGHT

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# COURTEOUS

# CASE NOTES

Common courtesy is a good thing to bring to school dances. How is it on display at this one?

Did you **find** all the successes *and* **MISTAKES?**

**Success!**  
Let's dance!

Courtesy and kindness go hand-in-hand!

**Did you find them all?**

**Start here!**

**Mistake.**

Standing around and gossiping about the other kids.

**Success!**

Letting someone go before you.

**Mistake.**

Someone forgot to dress for success.

**Mistake.**

Standing around and missing out on the fun.

**Mistake.**

How about taking turns with the dance partner, girls?

**Success!**

Hello, friend, I'd like you to meet . . .

**Success!**

Sharing the fun with a friend.

**Mistake.**

Hogging the dance floor with way-too-big moves.

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# SOFT SKILL #2

# POSITIVE



People think about and see the world in two very different ways. Some have a **positive** attitude, which makes them **optimistic** and open to opportunities. They look on the bright side of life. They think in terms of "I can" and "It is possible." A positive attitude is upbeat and encouraging.

Other people see things in a more negative way. The opposite of an optimistic attitude is a **pessimistic** one. People who think this way say things like "I can't" and "Things will never work out." It sees the worst in things and drags you and those around you down. But remember being pessimistic is different from depression. If you feel depressed, reach out to a parent or teacher for help.

Thinking about all the ways that something can go wrong is a gloomy mind-set. A positive mind-set considers how many ways things can go right! You can shift your focus to change a negative attitude into a positive one.

It starts with the way you talk to yourself. It is hard to be positive if your mind is busy **criticizing** yourself. The first step toward a positive attitude is to shut down the inner critic. When your mind says "I can't do this," tell it "I can give it my best shot." When it says "I'll never learn this stuff," tell it "Take it one step at a time." Treat yourself like you'd treat your very best friend.

A positive mind-set gives you more confidence, improves your mood, and reduces stress. Do yourself a favor and think positive!

## Pardon Me, but Your Attitude Is Showing!

- Crack more jokes.
- Exercise your bad moods away.
- Stop negative thoughts in their tracks.
- Name three things you are thankful for.
- Think about the best parts of your day before you go to sleep.



"I always like to look on the optimistic side of life."  
—Walt Disney

# FOR REVIEW ONLY

## SOFT SKILLS CASE #2: POSITIVE

Older students can help younger ones learn to read by becoming reading buddies. The younger kids learn to be better readers. The older kids learn to be better leaders. It's a win-win for everyone. Ms. Leafgren's class of second graders looks forward to reading with their reading buddies every week. *It works best when everyone brings a positive attitude. How is this session of reading buddies working out? Turn the page to find out.*

**DO:**  
Investigate positive successes and mistakes!

**DO NOT:**  
Write in this book!



# A POSITIVE ATTITUDE IS CONTAGIOUS

Where are the positive attitudes shining through?  
Who needs an attitude adjustment?

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# POSITIVE

# CASE NOTES

Read between the lines and find which reading buddies have positive attitudes. Which ones are putting out a negative vibe?

Did you **find** all the successes *and* **MISTAKES?**

**Success!**  
Let's read it again!

Does your attitude set a good example?

**Start here!**

**Did you find them all?**

**Mistake.**  
How about sharing some of those books?

**Mistake.**  
Nanny, nanny, boo boo. Catch me if you can!

**Mistake.**  
Acting too bored to care.

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**Success!**  
Taking good care of the books.

**Success!**  
Paying attention says thanks for the help.

**Success!**  
Your turn to tell me a story, little buddy.

**Mistake.**  
Making fun of your reading buddy.



# SOFT SKILL #3

# CONFIDENT



Remember the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears"? Everything those bears encountered was either too much, too little, or just right. Confidence is a little like that story. Being too **confident** says "I can do everything because I am so great." It involves a lot of bragging. Too little confidence says "I'm too scared to try anything new." As a result, new opportunities are missed. Confidence that is just right says "I can do this" and you do it.

Being confident means trusting and having faith in your abilities. The good news is that confidence is a skill you can learn. That's because it comes from experience. The saying "Practice makes perfect" is true. You set out to learn a new skill. You practice it until you finally master it. Then—presto—you build your confidence!

Being confident about one thing gives you the courage to try something else. That's how confidence grows. You learn that you are a capable person, and that gives you confidence to face all kinds of situations. Keep it going and you'll learn all kinds of new things.

## SOFT SKILLS CASE #3: CONFIDENT

Skateboarding is an exciting after-school activity. It's lots of fun if you know what you are doing. But it takes skill to learn those cool high-speed tricks. Confidence comes with lots of practice. Practice builds skills and abilities so you can enjoy this challenging sport.

Take a look at the skate park scene on the next page. Some of the students have good reasons to be confident of their skateboarding abilities. Others are clearly amateurs. There are some who are a bit overconfident and need to bail before they get hurt. Which ones are which?

# FOR REVIEW ONLY

## Become More Confident By ...

- Looking your best when you go out.
- Smiling, standing tall, and looking people in the eye.
- Getting to know yourself better.
- Setting small goals and achieving them.
- Keeping a positive attitude.
- Giving yourself a break and learning from your mistakes.
- Knowing that everything doesn't have to be perfect.



"Good manners are just a way of showing other people that we have respect for them."  
—Bill Kelly

**DO:**  
Investigate confident successes and mistakes!

**DO NOT:**  
Write in this book!



# SKATE AT YOUR OWN RISK



# CONFIDENT

Confident people know when to go for it. They also know when it is time to back off. Who is making confident choices here?

## Start here!

### Mistake.

Um, do you really think the blindfold is a good idea?

### Success!

Taking the time to try a new trick.

### Mistake.

Making fun of the other skaters.

### Success!

Making the rounds like a champ.

Did you **find** all the successes *and* **MISTAKES?**

# CASE NOTES

### Mistake.

Being too scared to try.

### Success!

Showing a friend how it's done.

Remember that you get good at what you practice.

## Did you find them all?

### Success!

You can do it! Pep talks encourage others to try new things.

### Mistake.

Standing in the way of someone else's success.

### Mistake.

Sitting on the board is for amateurs.

# FOR REVIEW ONLY



# SOFT SKILL #4

# RESPONSIBLE



**Responsible** people are trustworthy. They are dependable and reliable. They are sensible and mature. They think things through carefully and make good decisions. Are you getting a sense of why this soft skill is so important to learn? All of these things say good things about a person.

Being responsible means doing what you are supposed to do, when you are supposed to do it. It isn't always easy. Like other attitudes, being responsible is a choice. But it is always the right choice to make.

Your first job as a responsible human is to learn to take care of yourself. That means getting your homework in on time and helping with the dinner dishes without being asked. It means eating healthy foods and getting enough rest. Right now your parents, teachers and other adults remind you to do these things. Taking more responsibility for yourself has an upside. It comes with new freedoms and privileges!

Being responsible keeps you out of troubles. It also makes it easier for people to like and trust you. This is important now as a student and as part of a family. It will get even more important as you get older, start your career, and build an adult life.

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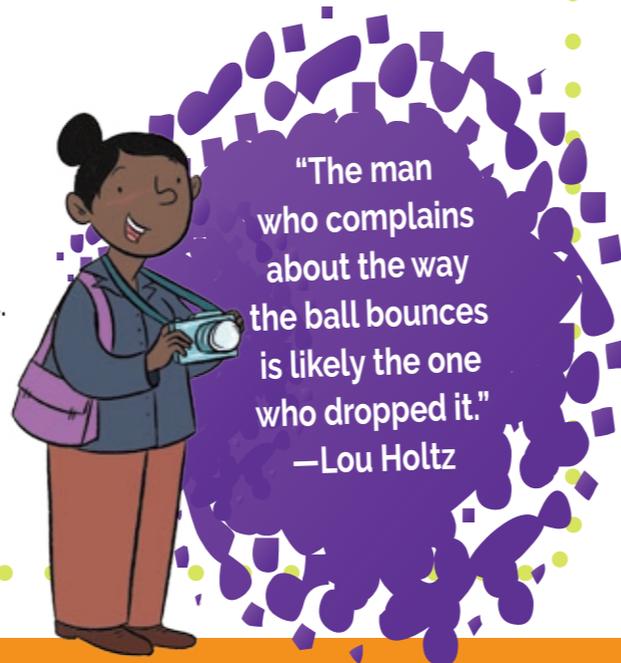
### SOFT SKILLS CASE #4: RESPONSIBLE

Ms. Bailey's class is doing a community service project at the animal shelter. There are dogs that need walking. Some need a bath. The cats need to be fed. Some want to be cuddled. And someone's got to help with scooping the, um, you know what...

Are Ms. Bailey's students up to the task? Turn the page and check out the responsible choices they are making.

## Responsible People ...

- Earn other people's trust.
- Say what they mean and mean what they say.
- Take care of themselves and others.
- Admit their mistakes and make things right.
- Try not to complain and avoid making excuses.
- Show up on time.



"The man who complains about the way the ball bounces is likely the one who dropped it."  
—Lou Holtz

**DO:**  
Investigate responsible successes and mistakes!

**DO NOT:**  
Write in this book!



# RESPONSIBILITY GOES TO THE DOGS (AND CATS)!

It is volunteer day at the local animal shelter, and some students are taking their responsibilities seriously. Can you tell which ones need some more training?

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# RESPONSIBLE

# CASE NOTES

Which of these students would you trust to care for a beloved pet? Who needs to work a little harder to be responsible?

Did you **find** all the successes *and* **MISTAKES?**

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## Can You Count On You to Make Responsible Choices?

**Start here!**

**Success!**

Walking pets when they need it.

**Success!**

Feeding the pet what they need to stay healthy.

**Mistake.**

Yelling at the pets instead of training them.

**Mistake.**

Letting someone else do the dirty work.

**Success!**

It's chow time!

**Mistake.**

Who let the dawgs out?

**Did you find them all?**

**Mistake.**

Sharing too much of a good thing at feeding time.

**Mistake.**

Meow. How about brushing the cats' hair too?

**Success!**

Showing the pets some love.

# WHAT HAVE YOU Learned?

# ATTITUDE QUIZ

**Question 1:**  
Having a good attitude is a \_\_\_\_\_ you make every day.

**Question 2:**  
Courtesy is another way to show \_\_\_\_\_.

**Question 3:**  
A positive attitude is upbeat and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Question 4:**  
"Things will never work out" is an example of a \_\_\_\_\_ attitude.

**Question 5:**  
To have \_\_\_\_\_ means that you trust yourself.

**Question 6:**  
It takes \_\_\_\_\_ to be confident in a new skill.

**Question 7:**  
The first person you need to take responsibility for is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Question 8:**  
Responsibility builds \_\_\_\_\_ with other people.

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## ANSWERS

1. choice
2. kindness or respect
3. optimistic
4. pessimistic
5. confidence
6. practice
7. yourself
8. trust



Attitude soft skills start here!

## GLOSSARY

**attitude** (AT-ih-tood) opinions and feelings about someone or something that affect how a person behaves

**confident** (KAHN-fih-duhnt) self-assured; having a strong belief in your own abilities

**courteous** (KUR-ee-uh-s) polite, respectful, and considerate

**criticizing** (KRI-tuh-sai-zuhng) finding fault, disapproving

**hard skills** (HAHRD SKILZ) specific skills needed to do a specific job

**investigate** (in-VES-tih-gate) to gather information or clues about something

**optimistic** (ahp-tuh-MIS-tik) believing that things will usually turn out well or for the best

**pessimistic** (pes-uh-MIS-tik) always seeing the worst side of a situation or believing the worst will happen

**positive** (PAH-zih-tiv) helpful or constructive; upbeat and optimistic

**random** (RAN-duhm) without any order or purpose

**responsible** (rih-SPAHN-suh-buhl) assuming the duty to do something; trustworthy

**sleuth** (SLOOTH) a detective, or person who is good at finding facts and clues

**soft skills** (SAWFT SKILZ) behaviors and personality traits people use every day to succeed in life



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**Diane Lindsey Reeves** likes to write books that help students figure out what they want to be when they grow up. She mostly lives in Washington, D.C., but spends as much time as she can in North Carolina and South Carolina with her grandkids.

**Connie Hansen** spent 25 years teaching college students about successful life skills. She lives in Lynchburg, Virginia where her favorite thing to do is play with her grandchildren. Her happy place is the beach!

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Ruth Bennett** lives in a small country village in the heart of Norfolk, England, with her two cats, Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria. She loves petting dogs, watching movies, and drawing, of course!