



Module 8: Common Ethical Issues

From time to time, employees may behave unethically. It is important to be able to identify unethical behaviour and more important to have the skills in place to address it. A successful manager should also be able to prevent poor behaviour and intervene before it escalates.

Click on the first lesson below—or the “*Start eLearning*” button above—when you’re ready to begin.



Unethical Behaviour



Appropriate Use of Company Assets



Plagiarism and How to Avoid It



Minimizing Gossip in the Workplace

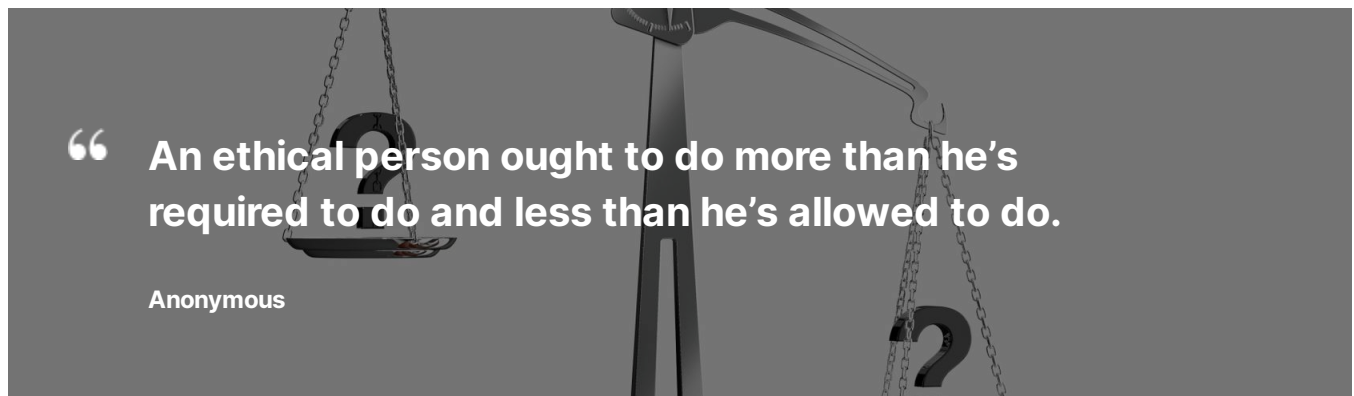


Knowledge Check



Module 8: Completed

Unethical Behaviour



“ An ethical person ought to do more than he’s required to do and less than he’s allowed to do.”

Anonymous

Recognize & Identify

Stress can take its toll on employees, and when emotions run high, behaviours can be difficult to keep in check. At the first sign of unethical behaviour, managers need to substantiate the reasoning behind it and put a stop to it. Allowing unethical behaviour to continue will have long-term consequences for the company.

Typical unethical behaviours include:

- Abusing sick leave.
- Lying to customers.
- Lying to customers.

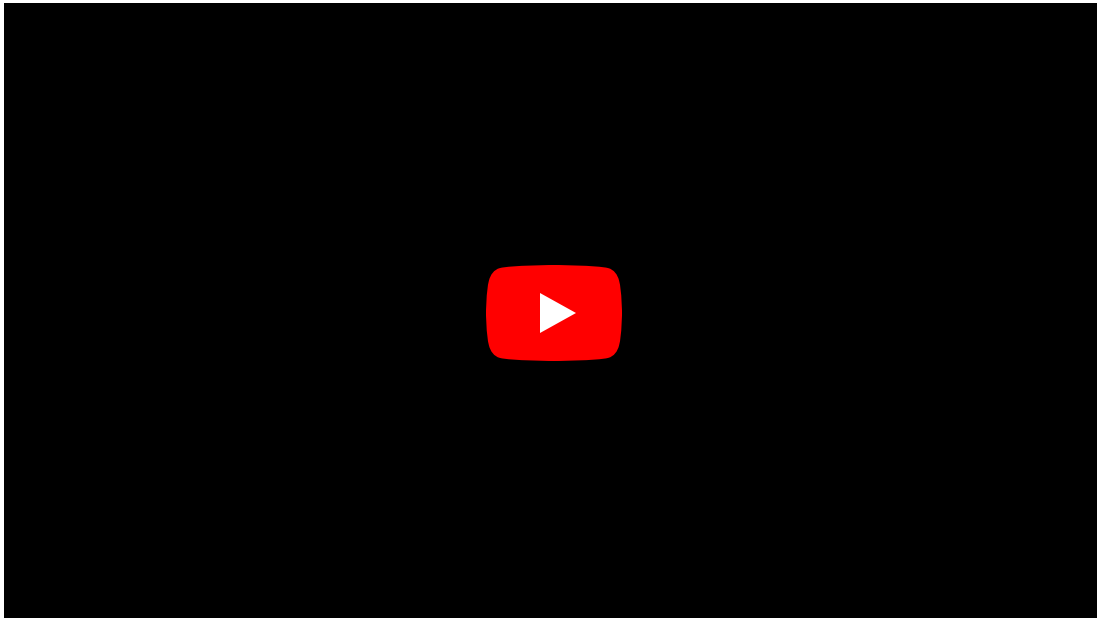
- Lying to customers.



The behaviour may seem insignificant, and most people are guilty of at least one of these incidents at one point in time, but these minor lapses in ethical judgment can be the gateway to even more unethical behaviour.

Watch this video clip...

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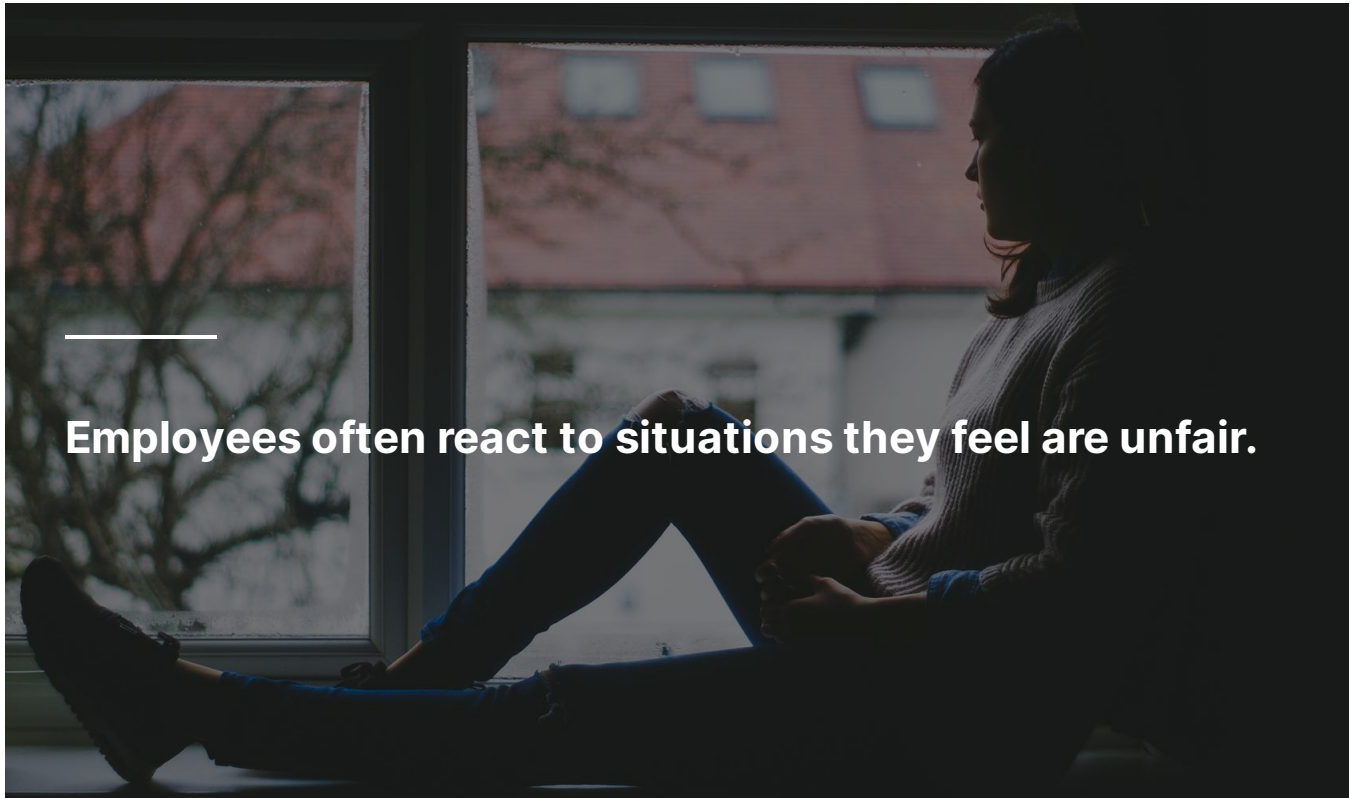


Unethical Behavior In The Workplace

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Preventing

Preventing unethical behaviour is much easier than dealing with the aftermath. We have already addressed ways to prevent unethical behaviour, such as implementing a code of ethics and ethical policies. Another tactic that can prevent unethical behaviour is improving job satisfaction. Employees often react to situations they feel are unfair.



Employees often react to situations they feel are unfair.

Addressing

Unethical behaviour needs to be addressed carefully. It is important to discuss the situation face-to-face. If the behaviour specifically violates company policy, remind the person about the policy. If the situation is a grey area, you may have to explain why it was not ethical. Approach the situation calmly and allow people to explain their actions. Do not jump to conclusions but do understand that people sometimes need guidance in

making ethical decisions. Should unethical behaviour continue, take the necessary disciplinary action.

Interventions

Workplace interventions occur when people are concerned about the welfare of their co-workers. Interventions are usually used to help co-workers with addiction problems such as alcohol or drug abuse. They can also be held when assisting co-workers deal with unethical behaviour specifically committed at work.

There are certain steps that need to happen if anyone chooses to hold an intervention:

Call an interventionist

A professional is needed to handle the situation.

2 of 5

Create an action plan

Meet

Plan how the intervention

Have the group meet together beforehand to iron out details.

3 of 5

Intervention

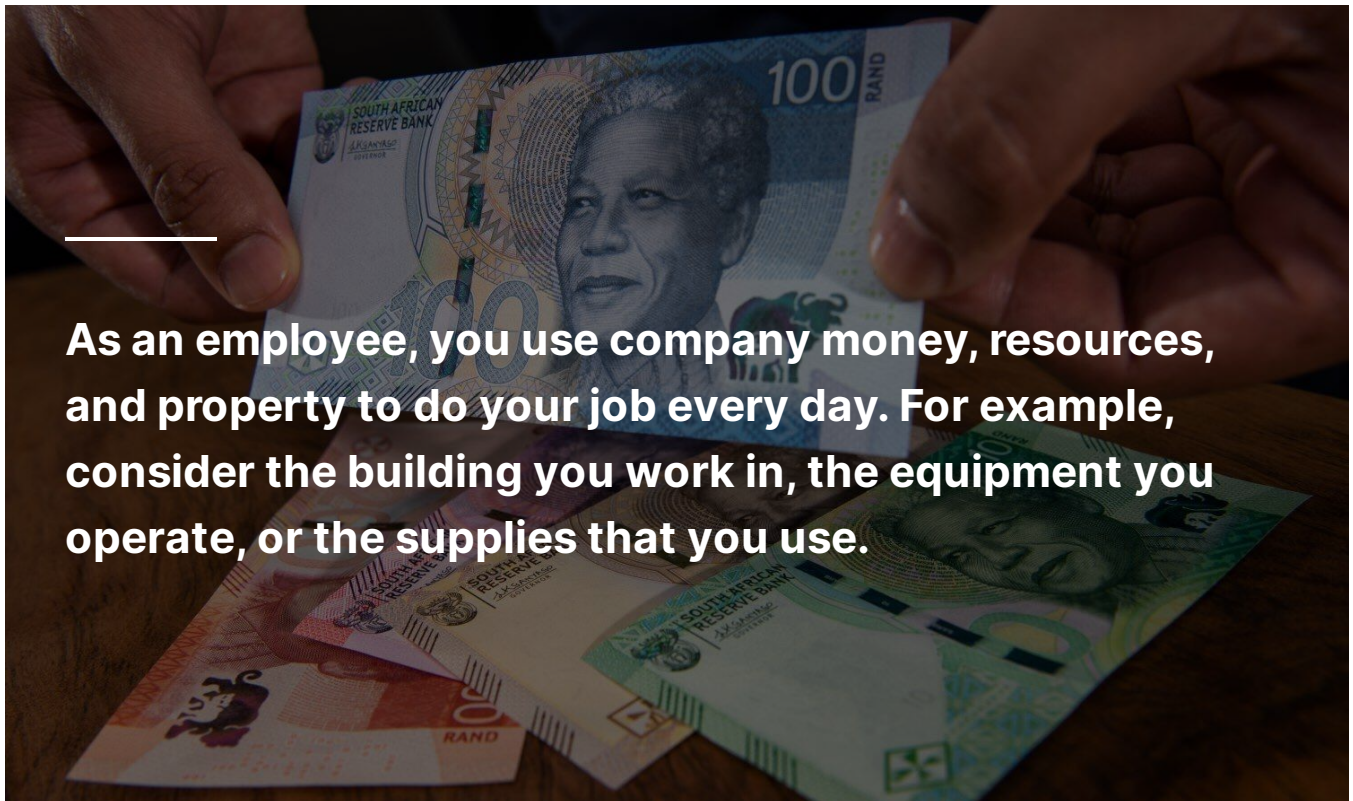
Hold the intervention for an hour or two and talk without judgment.

4 of 5

Treatment

Help the co-worker find treatment if they find it is necessary.

Appropriate Use of Company Assets



As an employee, you use company money, resources, and property to do your job every day. For example, consider the building you work in, the equipment you operate, or the supplies that you use.

All of these resources are examples of **company assets**. And, just like you trust your company to provide you with the assets you need to do your job, your company trusts you to use those assets appropriately.

In this lesson, you'll learn about both physical and intangible company assets. You'll then explore some general guidelines to safeguard company assets and use them appropriately.

What Are Company Assets?

In simplest terms, **company assets** are all the “stuff” your company owns. This includes physical resources and property—such as work facilities, equipment, supplies, and cash. But it also includes intangible resources and intellectual property—such as ideas, business plans, and customer data. Expand the rows below to see examples of both physical and intangible company assets:

Physical Assets —

- Office supplies (paper, pens, photocopiers, etc.)
- Company funds, credit cards, or expense accounts
- Computers, phones, or other forms of technology
- Facilities or buildings
- Machinery or equipment
- Desks, tables, chairs, or other furniture
- Company products and inventory
- Vehicles

Intangible Assets —

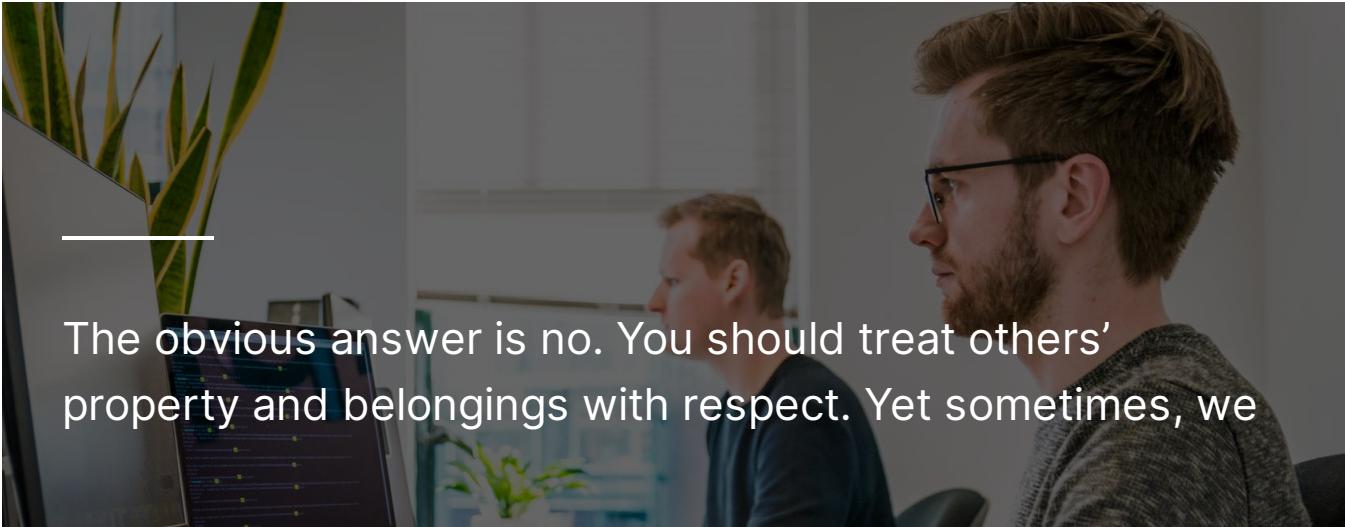
- Intellectual property
- Business plans
- Financial information
- Customer data or information
- Employee time

- Company brand and reputation

Regardless if they're physical or intangible, company assets have *value*. That's why it's important to take care of them. When company assets are lost, broken, misused, or stolen, the company pays the price—whether that's in lost profits, damage to the company's brand or reputation, or disrupted business operations.

Treat Others' Property as If It Were Your Own

Imagine that you're staying at an extended family member's house for a weekend. How would you treat their home and belongings? Would you leave their front door unlocked, walk through the house with muddy shoes, or steal articles of clothing from their closet? Would you invite a stranger over without asking for the homeowner's permission?



The obvious answer is no. You should treat others' property and belongings with respect. Yet sometimes, we



forget that the same ethics apply to our company's property and belongings.

Appropriate Use of Company Assets

So, what does it mean to use company assets appropriately? Different assets may have specific guidelines for appropriate use. However, here are some general guidelines that apply to all company assets:

1

Use assets for their intended, commercial purposes. Don't use company assets for non-approved personal activities. For example, use work computers for work activities—not surfing the web. Use office supplies in the office—don't hoard them for use at home. Or, use the corporate credit card to pay for work-related expenses—not for personal purchases.

2

Spend company funds wisely. Be prudent and economical when spending company funds. Guard against waste and abuse. For example, if you're traveling for work, don't make unnecessary purchases or choose the most expensive item on the menu just because it's not "your" money. Or, if you're making a company purchasing decision, do some research and try to find the best value.

3

Take care of company assets. Take reasonable steps to care for company assets and protect them from potential damage. For example, if you drive a company car, then take it to a mechanic for regularly scheduled maintenance and oil changes.

4

Safeguard assets from loss, abuse, or theft. Also, take precautions to safeguard company assets from loss, abuse, or

theft. For instance, follow company protocols for protecting customer data or other sensitive business information.

5

Don't give company assets to others. Remember that company assets are provided for you to do your job. They are not provided for your friends' or family members' personal use or benefit. So, don't give company assets away. For example, don't comp services or products for your friends. And don't share company secrets, business plans, or intellectual property with others.

6

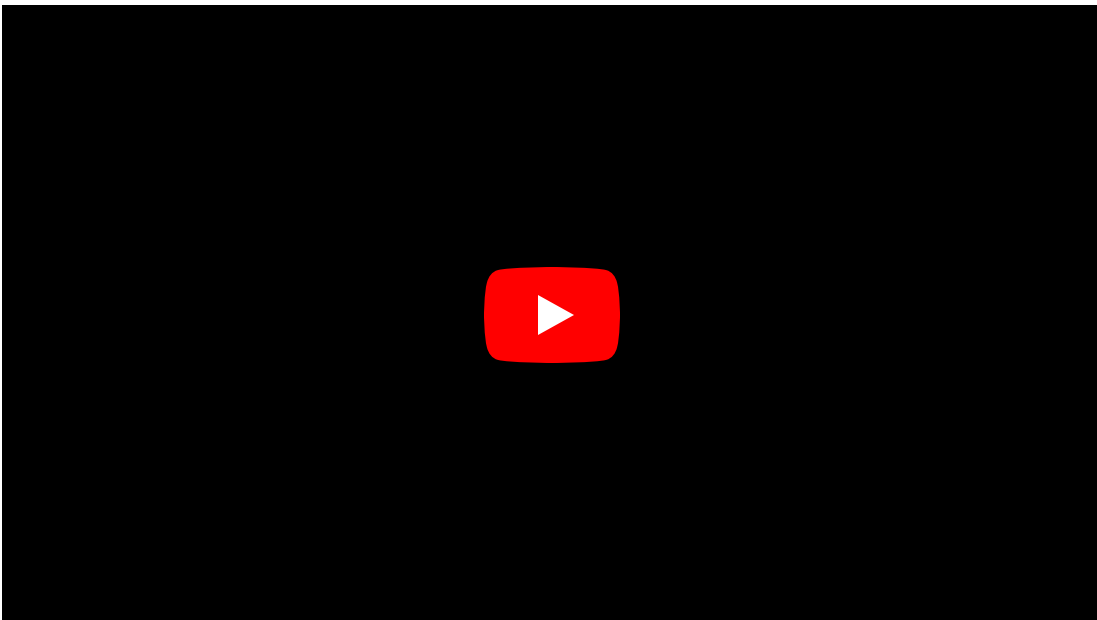
Don't use company assets for illegal or unethical activities. Finally, only use company assets for legal and ethical activities. Don't use company computers to store or send obscene materials, for example. Or, don't use trade secrets and confidential information to compete unfairly.



Always follow your company's specific rules, code of conduct, and protocols for the appropriate use of company resources. Employees who misuse or abuse company assets may face disciplinary action—or even legal action if it involves theft.

Watch this video clip...

 **YOUTUBE**



Kinds of Company Assets: Physical Property, Financial Property, Intellectual Property

Physical property consists of all the physical stuff that you come in contact with in the course of your jobs such as products, tools, office supplies, company vehicles, computers, and everything else that you can touch. That company property should not be sold, loaned, or given away without proper authorization.

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To check your understanding of the lesson content, complete the activity below...

Check your understanding of the appropriate use of company assets by completing the following sorting activity. Drag and drop each statement into the correct category:

Appropriate or **Inappropriate**.

Appropriate

Using the company phone for
sales calls

Expensing a meal with a client

Making photocopies of a work report

Eating company-provided snacks at work

Running personal errands on your lunch break

Inappropriate

Running personal errands during working hours

Posting about private business information on your personal social media account

Stocking your home with supplies from the office

Providing family members with a free subscription to your company's product

Selling or sharing customer
data

The Bottom Line

It's easy to take company assets for granted. When equipment breaks, your company fixes it. When materials run out, your company replaces them. But all of these assets don't just magically appear or replenish themselves. Your company foots the bill.

So, don't forget that the facilities, equipment, materials, intellectual property, and everyday resources you use at work still belong to your company. Treat them with respect, and use them for their intended, commercial purposes.



If in doubt—ask. Are you unsure whether you can use the company photocopier for a personal document? Or, do you have questions about what items you can and can't expense on a work trip? If in doubt, ask your manager or human resources department.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Plagiarism and How to Avoid It



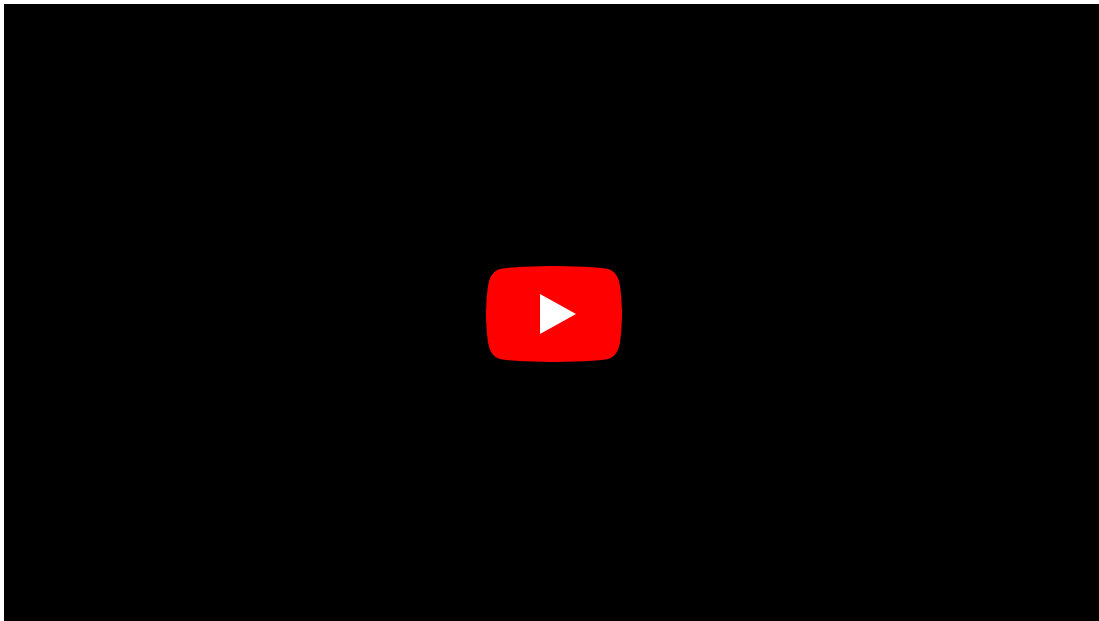
An Easy Mistake

Technology has made sharing ideas nearly effortless. With a simple like, share, or copy-paste, we can distribute content instantly. Unfortunately, that means it is also easier than ever to plagiarize.

Plagiarizing is claiming someone else's work as our own. Done intentionally or not, plagiarism is the theft of someone else's ideas—and it carries serious consequences. In this lesson, you'll learn about four common forms of plagiarism and how to avoid them.

Watch this video clip...





Avoiding Plagiarism

In this video, you'll learn more about the strategies you can use to avoid plagiarizing others' work. Visit <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/useinformationcorrectly/avoiding-plagiarism/1/> for our text-based lesson. We hope you enjoy!

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What Is Plagiarism?

Referring to other people's work isn't wrong. In fact, outside sources can add depth and legitimacy to what you're creating. However, when you present someone else's work as your own, you are committing **plagiarism**.



Did you know? Beyond writing—photos, videos, and even ideas can be plagiarized. Any content taken from an outside source without proper attribution or credit counts as plagiarism.

What Do I Have to Cite?

While all outside references require a citation, citing **common knowledge**, or information that your audience would already know, is not necessary. Examples of common knowledge include statements like *“George Washington was the first president of the United States,”* or, *“Pollution is bad for the environment.”*

When determining if a fact is common knowledge, ask yourself:

- *Who is my audience?*
- *Can I assume they already know this information?*
- *Can I verify this fact in at least five credible sources?*

Common knowledge differs between audiences. For example, scientific formulas may require citations for a public blog post—but not for a chemistry paper.

Is Plagiarism Really That Bad?

"It's just one line! No one will ever notice!" Plagiarism is not a victimless act. Whether it's a whole article or just one line, stealing someone else's work harms everyone involved, including the plagiarizer.

While it may seem like an easy way to save time and effort, plagiarism can damage both individuals and businesses. Here's who plagiarism hurts:

1


Creators. Creators don't get the credit they deserve when their work is plagiarized. Plagiarism robs creators of money, job opportunities, and reputation.

2

Organizations. Plagiarism by a single employee can result in legal and financial repercussions for an entire organization. An organization's public image and business partnerships can sustain long-term damage, even if the employee is dismissed.

3

The person who plagiarizes. The person who plagiarizes risks losing their job, referrals, and credibility. One copy-paste can undermine an entire career.



“ There is much difference between imitating a man and counterfeiting him.

Benjamin Franklin

Common Types of Plagiarism

There are several types of plagiarism, but they all have one thing in common: They fail to give credit where it's due. Understanding different types of plagiarism can help us spot it in our own work. Expand the rows below to learn more.

Verbatim —

Verbatim plagiarism occurs when content is copied without any alteration and lacks proper attribution to the original creator. It's the simplest form of plagiarism to identify—and for others to discover.

For example: Copying a paragraph from a news article and pasting it into a report you're preparing, without noting the original author, is a form of verbatim plagiarism.

Mosaic —

Mosaic plagiarism is borrowing phrases or slightly altering someone else's language while still maintaining the core thought and structure of the original text. A few words may be rearranged or replaced, but the original idea and composition remain intact, without having been flagged with quotation marks.

For example: Rephrasing lines from someone else's speech without crediting their contribution is a form of mosaic plagiarism.

Inaccurate Citation —

When citations within a text are incorrect or incomplete, **inaccurate citation** plagiarism can occur. Different forms of writing have different citation expectations, but all of them exist to clarify where outside information was found. Make sure to follow all conventional guidelines when it comes to citation.

For example: Using a quotation but attributing it to the incorrect author is a form of inaccurate citation.

Self-Plagiarism —

Self-plagiarism may seem contradictory—how can you plagiarize yourself? But if you complete work for one organization and then repurpose it for another, you might actually be stealing from an employer who retains ownership over your content. Ask yourself: *“Does someone else own this content? Has it been published elsewhere?”* If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then you need to include a citation.

For example: Consider a researcher who reuses their study’s data to publish it in multiple publications. If they do not cite the other places where the data has been referenced, they are self-plagiarizing.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

With so many different forms of plagiarism, avoiding it can seem overwhelming for creators.

Start with an intention to avoid plagiarism, and follow these tips to give credit where it's due.

Tip 1

Use Sources Wisely

The first tip is to be smart in how you use references and sources. Outside references should support, not overshadow, what you're creating. Your ideas should **expand on outside references** instead of reiterating them.

Rather than simply copying someone else's points, use your sources to develop, frame, and add credibility to the ideas you're presenting. As you go, ask yourself: *"How am I using this source? How does it relate to what I'm trying to say?"*

Tip 2

Document Everything

The second tip is to document everything. **Take detailed notes** as you write, recording the citation information of every source you think you'll use. Common citation information to collect includes:

- Title
- Creator's name
- Date of creation
- Information's location within the source (Such as page numbers, chapters, or sections)
- Publication

Evaluate each reference to understand what it means and how it fits in.

Finally, note citation information when referring to a source instead of waiting until you finish a draft. That way, you'll already have outside information accounted for while editing.

Tip 3

Quote Directly

Also, don't hesitate to **quote content directly**. While paraphrasing can help condense a source's meaning, it also makes plagiarism more likely and may skew the meaning of the original content. If you're unsure whether a direct quotation would be appropriate, ask yourself: *"Can I maintain the meaning of the source if I paraphrase? Would it be simpler to quote rather than summarize?"*

Whether you decide to paraphrase or quote, don't forget to cite!

Tip 4

Proofread Your Work

Next, always **proofread your work**. After you complete a draft, go back and examine how you're using every reference. As you edit, consider: *"Did I give credit where credit is due? Did I use these sources to present an original idea?"*

Tip 5

Use an Online Tool

Finally, enlist the help of an **online tool**. While the internet has made it easy to steal ideas, it can also help you avoid plagiarism. Click on the links below for resources:

Plagiarism checkers:

- [Copyscape](#)
- [Grammarly](#)
- [Plagiarism checker](#)

Citation creators:

- [Easybib](#)
- [Bibme](#)

Summary

Plagiarism can harm content creators, organizations, and even the person doing the plagiarizing. Luckily, avoiding it isn't difficult. By being mindful of your sources and how they support your work, you can present original ideas and give everyone the recognition they deserve.



To check your understanding of the lesson content, complete the activity below...

Can you identify the four different forms of plagiarism? Drag and drop to match the definition with the correct term.

SUBMIT

The Bottom Line

Plagiarism is the failure to give credit to those who deserve it. It devalues creators, endangers organizations, and puts individuals like you at risk. Always cite your sources to avoid plagiarism and establish your work as original and credible.



When in doubt, cite your source. Protect yourself from the consequences of plagiarism by giving credit if you're unsure. It's better to be safe than sorry.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Minimizing Gossip in the Workplace



An Innocent Chat

It's Friday afternoon. You're all ready to leave the office after a long week when a colleague blurts, *"Could you believe what Taylor said to Ezra at the meeting?"*

And before you know it, you're sucked into a storm. People are taking sides and passing judgment on colleagues they don't even know. Hostility is rising fast.

If left unchecked, workplace gossip can spiral out of control. A few innocent words could spark a wildfire—burning a company's positive culture to ash.

In this lesson, you'll learn what can be classified as gossip in the workplace, why we gossip, and how it can be harmful. You'll also explore five ways to stop gossip cold.

Watch this video clip...





Before You Gossip, Watch This

Have you ever watched the negative chain reaction gossiping can create? Jay Shetty warns that gossiping and complaining create negativity in your life and the lives of those around you. The more negative you are now, the more negative your life is likely to be in the future.

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“Words have no wings but they can fly a thousand miles.”

Korean Proverb

What Qualifies as Gossip?

So, what is workplace gossip, exactly? Put simply, **gossip** is talking about someone who's not there. And, though it usually has a negative connotation, gossip isn't always bad. You can think of gossip as *positive*, *neutral*, or *negative*.

Flip the flashcards below to see examples of the different types of gossip.

Positive

“Tiffany is so smart and helpful!”

Neutral

“I heard Omar’s launching a new lunch program.”

Negative

“Did you hear that Jordan’s having an affair with Jade?”



Positive gossip can increase collaboration and goodwill. Neutral gossip spreads information with neither malice nor praise. Negative gossip creates division, often by sharing private information that could harm or embarrass someone.

Why Do We Gossip?

Humans are social creatures. We rely on information for survival and collaboration. Without shared information, we’d never have gone to the moon or even built cities. Certainly, no one would be using the internet.

In a way, then, gossip is a natural part of being human. But it’s also a double-edged sword. For example, sharing scientifically accurate information about a disease can save

lives, while spreading misinformation about that same disease could lead to more illness or even death.

3 Purposes of Gossip

Regardless of intent, gossip serves three primary purposes. Move through each card to learn more about them.

Purpose 1

Sharing Information



Gossip can fill an information void—especially when official communication channels function poorly. If knowledge is concentrated, the only way to relay restricted information might be through gossip. That means gossip can be a symptom of a larger breakdown in communication, even as it provides a way to spread confidential or sensitive information.

For example: *“Did you hear the company’s thinking about laying off a bunch of employees?”*

Purpose 2

Releasing Emotion



When another person's actions are frustrating or even just annoying, talking to a third party about those feelings can be cathartic. However, gossip can also increase hostility, even among people who weren't involved in the situation. And sometimes, rumors about others could be motivated by jealousy or other negative feelings.

For example: *"Can you believe this? Fernanda put me on a night shift for a whole week without any notice! I'm going to have to rearrange my whole schedule. She always does this, and I'm so sick of it."*

Purpose 3

Creating a Sense of Belonging



Gossip provides a shortcut to forming social connections. Talking with someone else about a third party or sharing juicy inside information can make us feel like part of a group. But it can also pit one group against another, creating a dysfunctional environment. And it isolates people left out of the circle.

For example: *"Guess what? Neeha and Eli are throwing a party for the team ... but they didn't invite us."*

Summary

Gossip is great for sharing information, expressing emotion, and bonding with others. But if done carelessly, gossip can also spread sensitive or false information, promote hostility, and sow division.

4 Reasons Negative Gossip Is Harmful

If gossip turns negative in the workplace, it's a sign that something's not working. Maybe there's a communication breakdown because information travels in silos. Or perhaps people don't feel included, so they gossip with others instead of talking about feeling excluded. Let's look at four reasons that negative gossip is harmful:

1

It shifts responsibility. When we gossip, we sidestep issues by not communicating directly about the problem.

2

It's easily amplified. Even if just two people in a company of 500 are gossiping about a lot of people, others will inevitably get pulled into the drama.

3

It destroys trust. When talking behind others' backs becomes a company norm, trusting one another becomes increasingly difficult. Over time, this can break down communication.

4

It promotes unhealthy cliques. Negative gossip leads to an "us vs. them" mentality that pits one group against another.

“Words spoken can never be recalled.”

Wentworth Diller

How to Minimize Negative Gossip in the Workplace

Now that we know how negative gossip can be harmful, here are five ways to stop it from spreading at work. Expand the rows below to learn more.

Ask About Its Purpose —

A single question can be enough to interrupt gossip: *“What would you like me to do with this information?”* That can help someone shift gears from unproductive venting to thinking about an actionable path forward.

Suggest Solutions —

People often gossip when they don't see a solution. Help them get there by offering examples of how to approach the problem from a more objective angle.

Communicate Clearly and Often —

Gossip pervades many workplaces in part because of bad or incomplete communication. Keep people in the loop, so they don't feel left out and turn to gossip for information.

Encourage Positive Gossip —

Saying good things about others fosters teamwork. To discourage negative gossip, spread positive information instead.

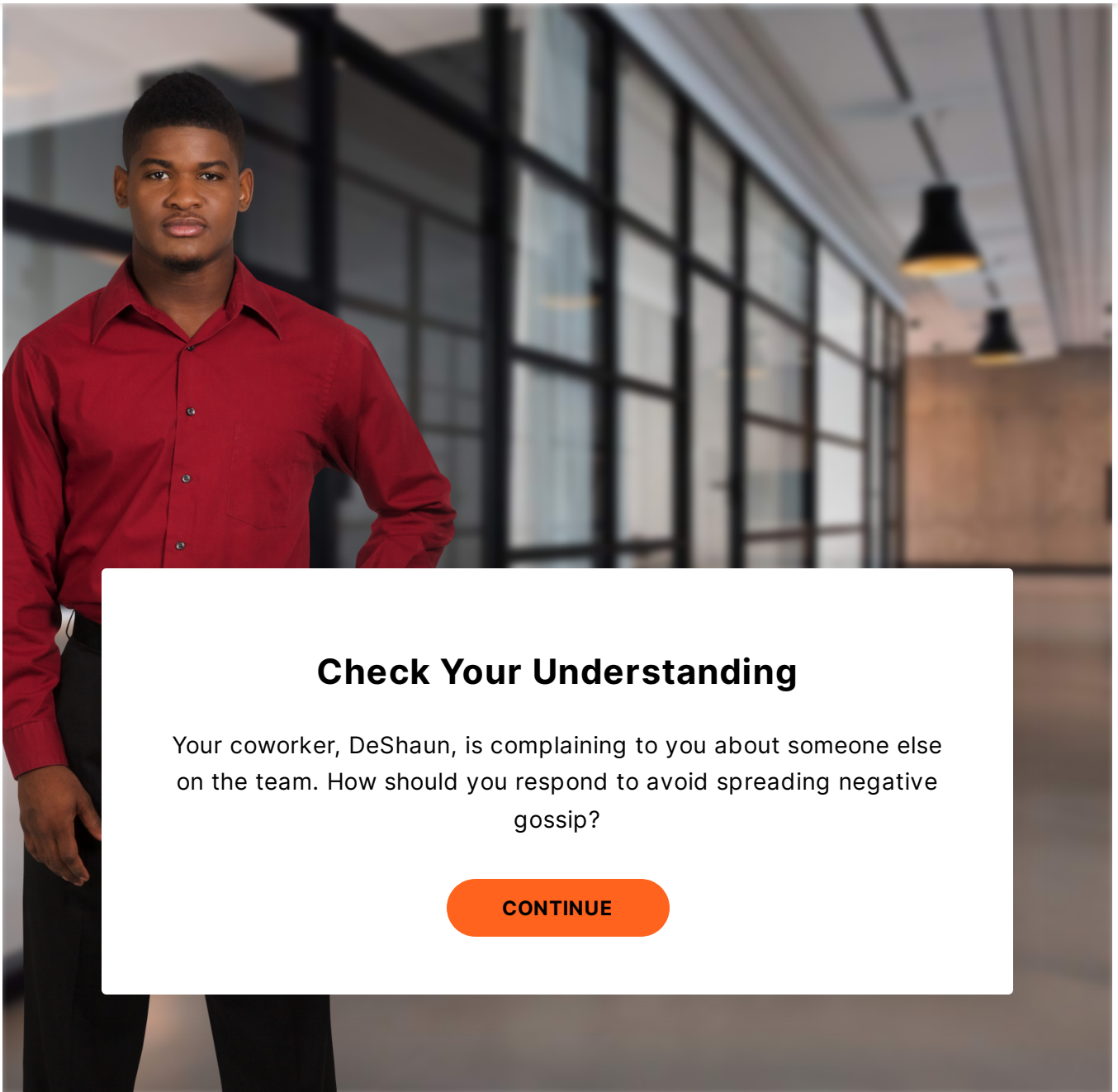
Withdraw Attention —

People who share negative gossip usually want attention and validation. Rather than nodding along, excuse yourself politely and move on. Losing their audience will short-circuit the process.



To check your understanding of the lesson content, complete the activity below...

Check your understanding of how to deal with negative gossip at work by navigating the following scenario.



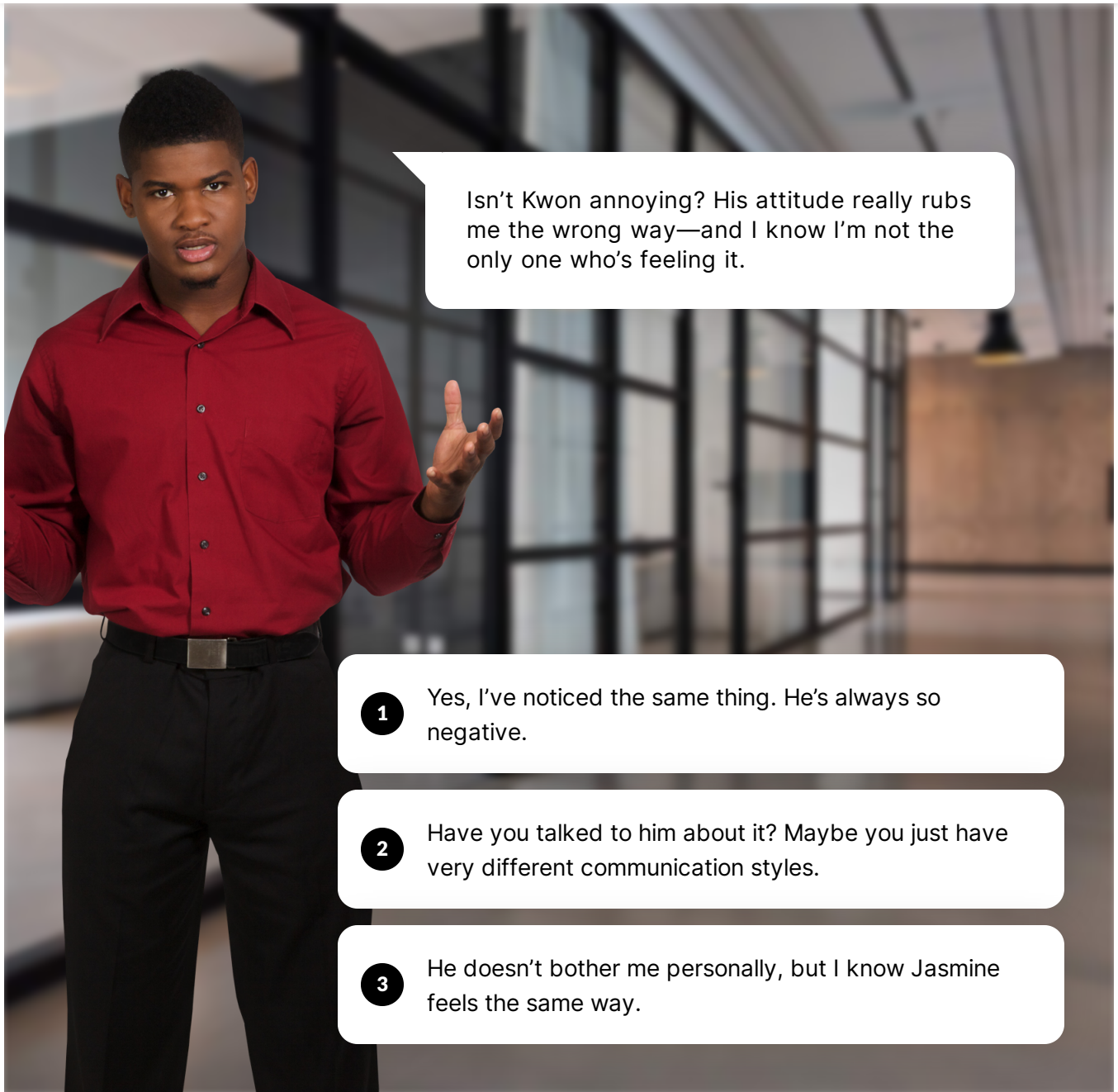
Check Your Understanding

Your coworker, DeShaun, is complaining to you about someone else on the team. How should you respond to avoid spreading negative gossip?

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 1

Continue → Next Slide



Isn't Kwon annoying? His attitude really rubs me the wrong way—and I know I'm not the only one who's feeling it.

1

Yes, I've noticed the same thing. He's always so negative.

2

Have you talked to him about it? Maybe you just have very different communication styles.

3

He doesn't bother me personally, but I know Jasmine feels the same way.

Scene 1 Slide 2

0 → Scene 1 Slide 3

1 → Scene 1 Slide 4

2 → Scene 1 Slide 5



Adding Fuel to the Fire

By agreeing with DeShaun's negative comments about Kwon, you've enabled the gossip to spread even further. Let's try that again.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 3

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 2

Great Job!

DeShaun might follow up with yet another negative comment about Kwon, but by moving the conversation in a positive direction, you can encourage him to look for a solution.

START OVER



Scene 1 Slide 4

Continue → End of Scenario



Three's a Crowd

You may not agree with DeShaun, but bringing up a third party just makes the gossip problem worse. Let's try that again.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 5

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 2

The Bottom Line

Gossip spreads fast and can influence a company's entire culture. While positive gossip can foster teamwork and neutral gossip can help convey information—negative gossip sows discord, destroys trust, and creates unhealthy cliques. So, don't feed the fire. Always speak positively about others, and refuse to participate in hurtful conversations.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Lesson 5 of 6

Knowledge Check



Module 8: Review Questions

Question

01/10

It is important to address minor unethical behaviour, like cutting corners and abusing sick leave, because it may lead to more unethical behaviour in the long term.

True

False

Question

02/10

It is easier to deal with the aftermath of unethical behaviour than it is in preventing it.

True

False

Question

03/10

What should be done before a workplace intervention is performed?

- Call an interventionist
- Create an action plan
- Meet beforehand
- All of the above

Question

04/10

What is another tactic to dealing with unethical behaviour?

- Firing that employee
- Improving job satisfaction
- Creating a new position for them
- All of the above

Question

05/10

What is the best way to handle the unethical behaviour of an employee?

- Send them an email
- Speak to them face-to-face
- Visit them at home
- Have a subordinate do it for you

Question

06/10

When you suspect an employee of unethical behaviour, you should...

- Not jump to conclusions
- Assume the worst
- Ask others for their opinion
- None of the above

Question

07/10

What is the title of a professional who can help when a situation of unethical behaviour is discovered in the workplace?

- A podiatrist
- A psychologist
- An interventionist
- A pathologist

Question

08/10

How long should an intervention last?

- 30 minutes
- An hour and a half
- All day
- An hour or two

Question

09/10

If necessary, an employer should offer to_____for an employee in need.

- Provide more money
- Allow time off
- Help find proper treatment
- Help find another job

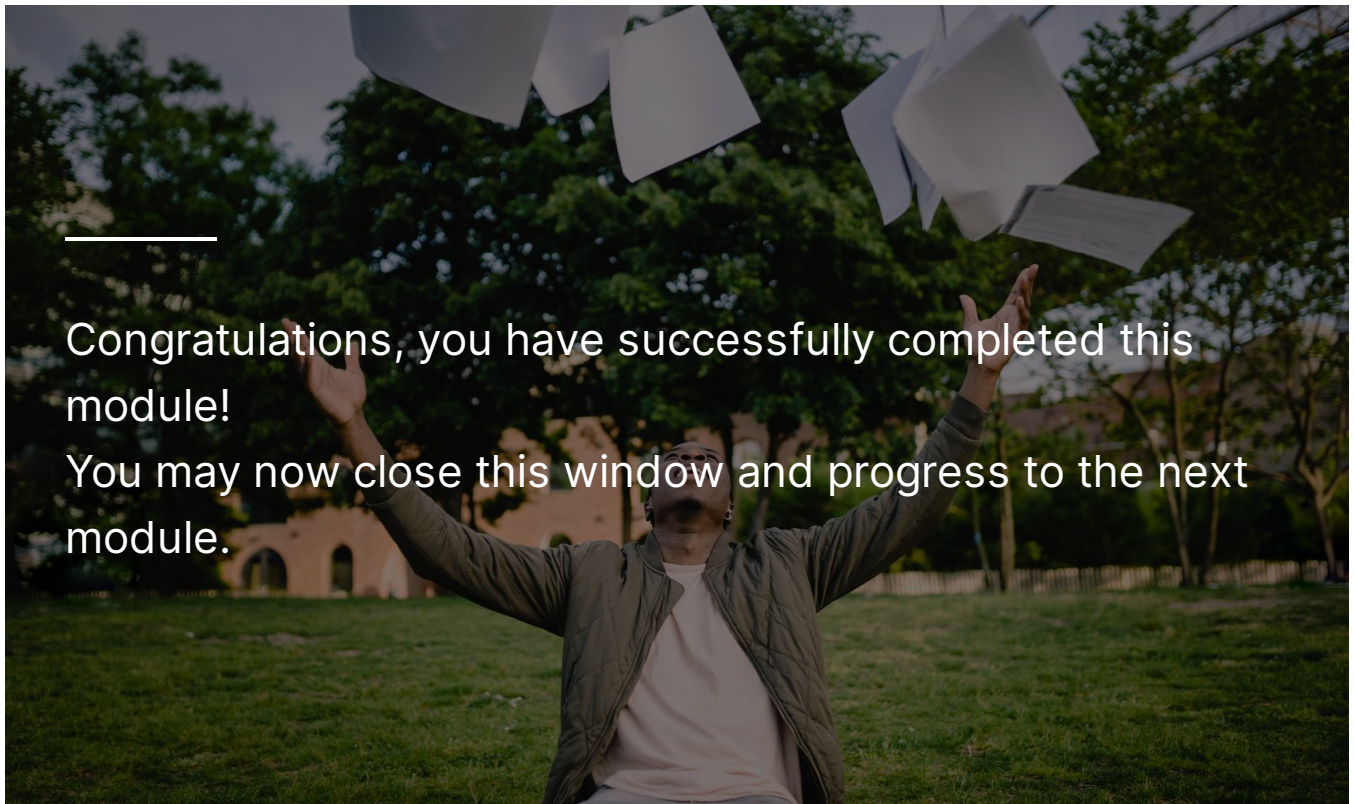
Question

10/10

Unethical behaviour needs to be addressed _____.

- Slowly
- Individually
- Carefully
- None of the above

Module 8: Completed



Congratulations, you have successfully completed this module!
You may now close this window and progress to the next module.