

## TAKING THE INITIATIVE

**A G E N D A**

- Starter
- Different Views
- Self-Start
- Listen Up!
- Conclusion
- Questions for Assessment

**Objectives**

Students will discover the benefits of seeking assistance from others.

Students will recognize that initiative affects the ability to seek assistance and gather information.

Students will listen to a guest speaker and consider how initiative makes a difference in life.

**Materials Needed**

- An assortment of about 20 small objects, such as pencils, chalk, paper clips, rubber bands, erasers, socks, toy or puzzle parts, doll clothes, yo-yos, nails, keys, shoelaces, old jewelry, and other common items that are easily identified (Part I)
- A sheet or length of material to cover the objects on display (Part I)
- A guest speaker who will spend 10 to 15 minutes talking to students about the importance of initiative and how it has helped him or her (If possible, bring in a high school student who can talk to your class about how he or she became involved in a school activity, project, or sport and what has happened as a result.) (Part III)

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**Starter (5 minutes)**

Ask students if they know why Orville and Wilbur Wright are famous. (*Students should say that they are the brothers who designed and flew the first engine-driven airplanes in 1903.*) Tell students that before that time, all airplanes were gliders, or planes that flew without engines. Explain that people thought the Wright brothers were a little crazy. In fact, the Wright brothers were not successful in their first four years of attempts.

Ask students what might have happened if the brothers had gotten frustrated and shelved their ideas. After a few students respond, tell students that they're going to see how important it is for them to find ways to make what they want happen, no matter the obstacles.

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**Part I Different Views (15 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students discover the benefits of seeking assistance from others.

**1. STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THE ACTIVITY.**

Before class begins, display the assorted objects you have gathered on a table at the back of the room. Be sure that each item is clearly visible. Cover the objects with a sheet or piece of material so that students are not able to see them as they arrive for class.

**2. STUDENTS VIEW THE OBJECTS.**

Begin the activity by giving the following directions:

- You will have one minute to view the objects at the back of the room.
- You cannot bring anything with you when you go to view the objects.
- After you have observed the objects, you are to sit down and make a list of everything you saw on the table.
- You must be seated and facing front when you are not viewing the objects.
- You cannot talk to anyone or share notes.

Send small groups of students, one group at a time, to the back of the room to view the objects. Be sure that groups are small enough so that students can easily look at all the objects. Monitor the time, keeping students quiet and moving at one-minute intervals.

**3. STUDENTS REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCES.**

Invite students to compare notes with each other, adding to their lists of objects. Then, begin a general discussion by asking questions such as the following:

- How many total objects do you think are on the table?
- How many of you were able to list all of the objects the first time?
- How many additional items did you add after talking with a few classmates?
- Do you think that you now have all the objects listed? Why or why not?
- What conclusions can you draw from this experience?

Guide students to the understanding that everyone observes things differently. Explain that people often remember different things about the same experience. Point out that we can always benefit from the assistance of others. We can learn from each other and work together to get the information we need.

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## Part II Self-Start (10 minutes)

*Purpose:* Students recognize that initiative affects the ability to seek assistance and gather information.

### 1. STUDENTS DEFINE “INITIATIVE.”

Ask students how they would feel if someone were to tell them that they are a person with initiative. Encourage students to explain their feelings.

Write the word “initiative” on the board. Through questions and comments, guide students to understand that “initiative” is the ability to get tasks started or done without needing to be told to do so. Point out that the verb “initiate” means “to start or to begin to do.”

### 2. STUDENTS EXPLORE THE CONCEPT OF INITIATIVE.

Prompt students to think about the importance of initiative by asking questions such as the following:

- Do you think the Wright brothers made an effort to talk to other people who knew about airplanes and engines? Why?
- Were you more successful in remembering and listing the objects in the back of the room when you worked alone or after talking with classmates? Why?
- Would you have taken the initiative to talk with others about what they remembered if I hadn’t told you that you couldn’t talk to each other?

Remind students that only they know when information or assistance could help them. In order to get it, they need to take the initiative. Explain that they need to make the effort and ask questions. Tell students that sometimes they may not ask the right person or they may not ask the right question. When this happens, they need to try again.

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**Part III Listen Up! (20 minutes)**

*Purpose:* Students listen to a guest speaker and consider how initiative can make a difference in life.

**1. PREPARE YOUR GUEST SPEAKER.**

Prior to class, talk with your speaker and explain what students will be learning in this lesson. Be sure that the speaker understands the purpose of his or her visit and the time limit.

Explain that you will invite students to ask questions when the speaker has finished his or her presentation. Suggest that the speaker give some personal information before getting into the body of the presentation, and describe any long-term goals that may be involved in the topic of the presentation.

**2. STUDENTS LISTEN TO THE PRESENTATION.**

Introduce your speaker to the class. Tell students that they will be able to ask questions or make comments after the speaker has finished. Suggest that as the speaker is talking, they write down any questions that they may want to ask.

**3. STUDENTS RESPOND TO THE SPEAKER.**

Invite students to ask any questions they may have. If students seem reluctant, prompt their participation by asking a question yourself or by making an observation about a specific action that was taken that illustrated initiative on the speaker's part. You might also ask students to speculate about how the speaker's life might be different if he or she had not taken a specific action.

Be sure to thank your speaker for sharing his or her time and experiences with your class. If time permits, encourage students to share their thoughts about the speaker's presentation after he or she has left.

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**Conclusion (2 minutes)**

Ask students to define "initiative." Ask students how having initiative is helpful in achieving goals. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Initiative is the ability to get started or to finish something on your own.
- Take the initiative to ask questions when you want or need information or assistance.

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**Questions for Assessment**

1. In part I of this lesson, did your partner remember any information that you did not remember? What information? What did this show you about working with others?
2. How might a lack of initiative hurt you?
3. Why is taking initiative important in achieving your goals?

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

**Extension:** Using Quotations

**Quote:** “Originality is unexplored territory. You get there by carrying a canoe—you can’t take a taxi.”  
—Alan Alda

**Activity:** Have students draw cartoons of people taking initiative. Have them explain their drawings in small groups.

**Extension:** Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

**Activity:** Have students research and write brief biographies about scientists and inventors. (For suggestions, see *Black Pioneers of Science and Invention* by Louis Haber and *Extraordinary Women Scientists* by Darlene R. Stille.)

Have students create a list that demonstrates what we owe to the initiative of the scientists and inventors discussed.

**Extension:** Writing in Your Journal

**Activity:** Have students write a note seeking support with a tough assignment or a problem that’s been worrying them.

Have students share their work in small groups and discuss how it feels to ask for help.

**Extension:** Using Technology

**Activity:** Have students use the internet to research the lives of their favorite authors. Have them identify the authors’ struggles and the initiative the authors took to overcome those struggles and begin their careers.

Afterward, have students share what they found by writing “press releases” about the authors they chose, by creating posters highlighting their careers and initiative, or by dressing up as characters from their favorite books and discussing the authors who “gave them life.”

**Extension:** Homework

**Activity:** Have students describe needs they have outside of school. Have them write a few paragraphs identifying how they can take the initiative to meet those needs.

**Extension:** Additional Resources

**Activity:** Have students read “Out on a Limb” from *Speaker’s Sourcebook II* by Glenn Van Ekeren. It tells the stories of the less-than-auspicious beginnings of the inventors of the disposable razor, Mary Kay cosmetics, and the large screen video monitor.

Have students find examples of other successful people who went “out on a limb.”

# GLOSSARY

## MODULE FOUR: MANAGING PERSONAL RESOURCES

**accountable:** Responsible; trustworthy.

**attitude:** 1. A position of the body, as suggesting some thought, feeling, or action.  
2. State of mind, behavior, or conduct regarding some matter, to indicate opinion or purpose.

**credible:** 1. Believable; trustworthy. 2. Worthy of credit, confidence, or acceptance.

**dilemma:** 1. A situation or problem that seems to offer no satisfying solution.  
2. A necessary choice between equally undesirable alternatives.

**excuse:** To explain a fault or an offense in the hope of being forgiven or understood; to seek to remove the blame from.

**initiative:** The ability to begin or follow through on things; determination.

**mature:** 1. Having reached full natural growth or development. 2. Worked out fully in the mind.

**prioritize:** To arrange or deal with in order of importance.

**responsible:** 1. To be answerable for one's own behavior or actions. 2. Able to be trusted or depended on; reliable.

**stress:** A state of extreme difficulty, pressure, or strain.

**time management:** Identifying tasks that need to be done; determining which tasks are the most important; arranging tasks in a manner that allows them to be completed by a certain time.