



**Time
Required:**
15-20 minutes

Grade Level:
3rd-12th
grades

Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace Activity

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“Telephone” Activity

Infusionomics Themes, Keystone Economic Principles, and Skills for the 21st Century Marketplace:

- **THEME: CHOICES**
 - **Keystone Economic Principle™ #3:** All choices have consequences
- **THEME: COSTS**
 - **Keystone Economic Principle™ #7:** Economic thinking is marginal thinking
- **THEME: RESOURCES**
 - **Keystone Economic Principle™ #6:** Do what you do best, Trade for the rest
 - **Skills:** 16. Communication Skills; a. Oral, Written, and Body Language; i. Explain the nature of effective communications
 - **Skills:** 16. Communication Skills; b. Active Listening

** For additional standards and content references, please see the [end of document](#).

Overview:

In the Telephone activity, the teacher starts by whispering a phrase to one student in the room. That student then whispers the message to the student next to him/her. The message gets passed on to each student in the classroom. The final student says out-loud the message that he/she heard.

Objectives:

This activity will help students see that messages often get distorted when they are passed along to many different people.

Materials and Handouts:

Phrases to start the telephone game.

- Example phrases to use: “Mahogany tables don't look good painted fuchsia.” “Cantaloupes are good for you in the morning.” “Storm surge is up to over sixteen feet.” “Cabin fever is contagious in many parts of the southeast.” (Warning: these are difficult examples)

Activity:

- Choose a phrase to begin the game, but do not announce the phrase to the students.
- Have the students stand in a circle or tell them to weave the message up and down their rows so that every student hears.
- Tell the students that they are to whisper the message in the next student's ear, and there is *no* repeating allowed.
- Whisper the message in the first student's ear. Have the students whisper the message until every student has heard.
- Ask the last student to say the message that he/she heard. (The message will likely be very different from the original message).
- Disclose to the class the original message.

Writing Prompt or Class Discussion:

Here are some optional questions for writing prompts and/or class discussion.

- Ask the students for general feedback on the activity.
- Questions on how communication travels:
 - Why was the ending message different from the beginning one?
 - What were the issues that may have caused people to pass on a different message than the person said to them? Noise in the background? An unclear message? Memory? The speaker did not speak clearly? The listener did not listen well?
- Questions on how this exercise applies to real life:
 - Have you ever seen this happen to a message in real life?
 - Why do messages get distorted?
 - How can we prevent miscommunications?
 - If you were the boss of a company, would you want to spread a message by telling someone to tell everyone else? Or would you want to make a large announcement to everyone in your company? Why?

Additional Standards and Content References

Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics:

- Standard #2 : Decision Making; Costs, Marginal Analysis
- Standard #5 : Trade; Barriers to trade, Voluntary Exchange

Partnership for 21st Century Life Skills Concept:

- Learning and Innovation Skills > Communications and Collaboration > Communicate Clearly

National Content Standards for Entrepreneurship Education:

- Ready Skills; D. Communications and Interpersonal Skills; Fundamentals of Communication

Economics Vocabulary:

- Consequence** - A result or effect of an action or decision; may be positive or negative.
- Cost** - The effort, loss or sacrifice necessary to achieve or obtain something.
- Depreciation** - A reduction in the value of capital goods over time due to their use in production.
- Diminishing Marginal Utility** - A widely observed relationship in which the additional satisfaction (marginal utility) associated with consuming additional units of the same product in a given amount of time eventually declines.
- Marginal Analysis** - A decision-making tool for comparing the additional or marginal benefits of a course of action to the additional or marginal costs.
- Trade** - The exchange of goods and services (such as knowledge) for money or other goods and services.
- Source: *EconEdLink.org* by the Council for Economic Education

Keystone Economic Principles™:

- For more information: http://infusionomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Keystone_Cheat.pdf