

# G.I.F.T.S.: Your No Long Misunderstood Friend

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Developed for ChelónaRSA  
Membership Access

## 1. What are G.I.F.T.S. panels?

- a. Teaching as scholarship
- b. Can be super competitive

## 2. How to put together a submission

- a. Select “individual paper”
- b. Parts
  - i. Title (be interesting!)
  - ii. Two-paragraph description of your G.I.F.T.S suitable for the online program, including a rationale, student learning outcomes (Clarity and concision are key)
  - iii. Brief articulation of how the G.I.F.T.S connects theory, concepts, and practice (the more applicable, the better)
  - iv. “A supporting document, no more than two pages in length, that includes a rationale of how your G.I.F.T.S addresses a specific communication theory, concept, or skill; an articulation of the student learning outcomes and how the G.I.F.T.S supports those, an agenda for your G.I.F.T.S, and an assessment of how the G.I.F.T.S has worked in the past with students.”

## 3. This year’s NCA in Dallas!

- a. “We are especially interested in G.I.F.T.S for the online or blended classroom context. We seek innovative uses of technology and activities designed around this technology to really engage students in these new mediated frontiers.”
- b. **Deadline is Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 11:59pm (yes we get 3 extra hours)**

#### 4. Examples!

#### Interview Battle Royal!

##### Procedure:

→ Ask students to write 5 “wacky” jobs on strips of paper. Examples are zookeeper, COMM 107 Instructor, person running around Nationals games in a Teddy Roosevelt costume, etc. Collect those jobs and put them in a plastic bag.

→ Draw a tournament bracket on the board and put students in two-person matchups. Here’s what a tournament bracket looks like:



→ One student is the interviewer and one is the interviewee. Flip a coin or rock/paper/scissors to determine who asks a question first. Draw a “wacky” job out of the bag. The interviewer has 5 seconds to think of a question to ask about that job, and the interviewee does their best to answer in the ways outlined in class. Students then switch roles and repeat, asking and answering questions about the same job. The class votes on whom to hire, and the winner advances in the tournament. Repeat until one student wins the Interview Battle Royal.

##### Results:

→ Students really enjoy this activity! They have fun thinking of wacky jobs and weird questions about those jobs, and the competitive aspect makes it entertaining. Asking the class to actually hire someone also forces them to consider what makes someone a strong candidate for positions, applying the material easily to their lives.

##### Potential Variations

→ The same activity, but the class votes on who asked the best questions instead of who had the best answers. Also, you could put them into two-person teams (so each bracket matchup would be 2-on-2) and the class could vote on which pair asked AND answered the questions best—this might work if you’re short on time because it would literally cut the activity time in half. Finally, *even if you’re done with the interview unit*, this works well as a miscellaneous speech activity whenever you need to fill 20-30 minutes since all it requires is a plastic bag and a winning personality.

## **Great Ideas For Teaching Students Proposal: The Ummmmpossible Speech!**

**Abstract:** The “Ummmmpossible Speech” is designed to help students recognize the frequency of their own verbal fillers in a fun and non-threatening environment. This activity also requires students to stay engaged for the duration of the lesson while getting to know their fellow classmates in a friendly competition. In addition to being fun and educational for students, the “Ummmmpossible Speech” also requires very little preparation on the part of the instructor.

**Rationale:** Most students already have a general understanding that saying “like” frequently during a speech can be problematic. However, many students fail to understand what filler words are, why they are so damaging in terms of wasted speech time and diminished speaker credibility, or how often people use these fillers in their everyday lives. This activity is designed to educate students on these issues while emphasizing the applicability of communication studies in their lives.

### **Required materials:**

- A stopwatch or kitchen timer
- A whiteboard or chalkboard

### **Procedure:**

1. Ask students what “verbal fillers” are, and make a list on the board. Spend some time unpacking why these fillers are so problematic for speakers in terms of credibility and wasted time. I like to mention that if a speech is 5 minutes long, but a speaker uses 30 verbal fillers, then they really only spoke for about 4:30 and have thus given others a 30 second advantage/head start on them in any argument.
2. Draw a tournament bracket on the board (i.e. “March Madness”). Ask for student volunteers or randomly assign students to a “first round” spot in the tournament.
3. Have a student to come to the front of the room. Ask them a random “getting to know you” open-ended question like, “If you could live in any state in the country, where would you live and why?” Give the student about 2-3 seconds to think about it, and then start the time. The goal is for the student to answer the question aloud for as long as possible without using any verbal fillers. The time stops when they stop speaking or use a filler word. Write the student’s time next to their name on the board, and then call up their “opponent” in the “first round” of the tournament, and ask them a different question. The student with the longest time of the two advances in the tournament.
4. Once a student has been eliminated, they are responsible for asking the prompt questions for the next round of the tournament, ensuring that all students stay involved for the duration of the lesson, even if they’re “eliminated” from the competition in the first round.
5. Repeat until one student is crowned champion of the “Ummmmpossible Speech!”

**Connection to concepts, theory, and/or skills:** The “Ummmmpossible Speech” relies on the belief that students learn course concepts quicker and retain more of the material if they are engaged in the lesson. If students are having fun, their test scores and speaking performances—and the entire classroom dynamic—will improve. By turning the understanding and quick-recall of this verbal filler concept into a friendly competition, students are offered an incentive to participate in their own education.

Moreover, if students can see how specific concepts like verbal fillers directly relate to the ways they communicate and interact in their daily lives, they will be more personally invested in their Communication courses. The “getting to know you” questions also foster a more friendly and supportive classroom dynamic as

students learn more about each other. Other variations of the activity also work well. I have used this model as a review format before exams by asking students general questions about course concepts (i.e. “Describe Trait v. State Communication Apprehension”) and to emphasize nonverbal delivery by keeping everything the same but requiring that students refrain from gesturing at all in order to recognize how many non-verbal traits are often carelessly used. The demand of students to listen and speak is also helpful for students with different learning styles.

**Typical results:** Students love the “Ummpossible Speech!” It can usually be explained in under a minute, and once students understand the competitive nature of the tournament bracket, even usually uninterested students enthusiastically participate. This activity also functions as a nice getting to know you game, and I usually use it on the first or second day of the course. Even when used as an “In Case of Emergency, Break Glass!” activity to fill up class time when a planned lesson finished early, the “Ummpossible Speech” works well because it requires less than two minutes of instructor preparation time.

### **Great Ideas For Teaching Students Proposal: Celebrities!**

**Abstract:** The game “Celebrities,” or “Celebs,” is a universally applicable teaching tool for communication instructors. This activity reinforces concepts by engaging students in a friendly competition of who can recall and present the lesson material the fastest, creating entertaining lessons involving even the least-exciting of communication chapters. This activity encourages the students themselves to present material in differing ways, helping students with divergent learning styles to absorb course concepts quicker. In addition to being highly educational and fun for students, Celebs also requires very little pre-class preparation for instructors.

**Rationale:** While many communication subjects easily lend themselves to fun and educational activities, other content areas are more challenging and can lead to lecture-dominated, instructor-centric presentations during which students sit silently and unengaged. Celebrities provides one way for instructors to avoid this potential pitfall by turning even the most dense subject material into an entertaining, instructional activity. Moreover, Celebrities requires the presentation of course concepts in a different ways, placing the burden on the students themselves to explain material to each other, which is useful if an instructor finds that her/his planned lesson is finished with significant class time remaining.

#### **Required materials:**

- Note cards or strips of paper
- A plastic grocery bag
- A whiteboard or chalkboard

#### **Procedure:**

1. In marker or pen, write a key word or phrase from the chapter on a note card or strip of paper.
2. Put the note cards in the grocery bag one at a time, briefly reviewing each with the class. Repeat with as many key words or phrases as needed. Anywhere from 10-25 concepts/words is a good amount.
3. Draw a tournament bracket on the board (i.e. “March Madness”). Ask for student volunteers or randomly assign students to a “first round” spot in the tournament.
4. Have one student come to the front of the room. Hold the open grocery bag full of word cards in front of the student.

5. Tell the student their job is to get the rest of the class to guess as many words from the bag as possible without actually saying the word itself, like in “Taboo.” For example, if one of the phrases in the bag is “communication apprehension,” then the student could say, “People with high THIS are unlikely to enjoying speaking in public.” Once the class correctly guesses the word, the student reaches into the bag and grabs another card. Their goal is to get the class to say as many words as possible in a given time limit—I usually use 30 seconds for the “1<sup>st</sup> round” and 45 seconds for each addition round. After one student has gone, then their “opponent” in the tournament bracket has a turn.
6. Repeat until one student is crowned champion of “Celebrities!”

**Connection to concepts, theory, and/or skills:** Celebrities relies on the assumption that students learn course concepts quicker and retain more of the material if they are engaged in the lesson. If students are having fun, their test scores—and the entire classroom dynamic—will improve. By turning the understanding and quick-recall of the material into a friendly competition, students are offered an incentive to participate in their own education. Moreover, since the burden is on the students themselves to understand and internalize the material so they can articulate it in class, there is a clear incentive to study and work hard in a fun and lighthearted classroom atmosphere.

**Typical results:** Students love Celebrities! It can usually be explained in under a minute, and once students understand the competitive nature of the tournament bracket, even usually uninterested students enthusiastically participate. The limited number of words/phrases in the bag necessitates that the students find new and creative ways to suggest each concept, which increases student comprehension since the students themselves are explaining the material. Having incorporated this game into dozens of lessons, I can say with confidence that Celebrities is a great activity for virtually any communication lesson. Even when used as an “In Case of Emergency, Break Glass!” activity to fill up class time when a planned lesson finished early, Celebrities works well because it requires less than two minutes of instructor preparation time.

### **Great Ideas For Teaching Students Proposal: SLAP!**

**Abstract:** The game “SLAP” is a universally applicable teaching tool for communication instructors. This activity reinforces concepts by engaging students in a friendly competition of who can recall the lesson material the fastest, creating entertaining lessons involving even the least-exciting of communication chapters. SLAP lets instructors present material in differing ways, helping students with divergent learning styles to absorb course concepts quicker. In addition to being highly educational and fun for students, SLAP also requires very little pre-class preparation for instructors.

**Rationale:** While many communication subjects easily lend themselves to fun and educational activities, other content areas are more challenging and can lead to lecture-dominated, instructor-centric presentations during which students sit silently and unengaged. SLAP provides one way for instructors to avoid this potential pitfall by turning even the most dense subject material into an entertaining, instructional activity. Moreover, SLAP requires the presentation of course concepts in a different ways, which is useful if an instructor finds that her/his planned lesson is finished with significant class time remaining.

#### **Required materials:**

- Note cards or strips of paper

- Tape or poster putty
- Multiple colors of markers (optional)
- A whiteboard or chalkboard

**Procedure:**

1. In marker or pen, write a key word or phrase from the chapter on a note card or strip of paper.
2. Using tape or poster putty, stick this word on the board. Repeat with as many key words or phrases as needed. Anywhere from 10-25 concepts/words is a good amount.
3. Draw a tournament bracket on the board (i.e. “March Madness”). Ask for student volunteers or randomly assign students to a “first round” spot in the tournament.
4. Have two students who are facing each other in the “first round” come to the front of the room and stand next to each other facing the board with all of the word/concept cards.
5. Describe a concept or word without actually saying it (like in the game “Taboo”). For example, if one of the phrases on the board was “communication apprehension,” then the instructor could say, “People with high THIS are unlikely to enjoying speaking in public.” The first of the two students to literally SLAP the phrase “communication apprehension” on the board gets the point. The first student to get 3 points wins, and advances in the tournament.
6. Repeat until one student is crowned champion of “SLAP!”

**Connection to concepts, theory, and/or skills:** SLAP relies on the assumption that students learn course concepts quicker and retain more of the material if they are engaged in the lesson. If students are having fun, their test scores—and the entire classroom dynamic—will improve. By turning the understanding and quick-recall of the material into a friendly competition, students are offered an incentive to participate in their own education.

**Typical results:** Students love SLAP! It can usually be explained in under a minute, and once students understand the competitive nature of the tournament bracket, even usually uninterested students enthusiastically participate. The limited number of words/phrases on the board necessitates that the instructor find new and creative ways to suggest each concept, which increases student comprehension of the material. Having incorporated this game into dozens of lessons, I can say with confidence that SLAP is a great activity for virtually any communication lesson. Even when used as an “In Case of Emergency, Break Glass!” activity to fill up class time when a planned lesson finished early, SLAP works well because it requires less than two minutes of instructor preparation time.

**“Look at Me, Stop Crying, Look at Me!?”: “The Bachelor” and the Basic Course**

**Abstract:** Good teaching tools are entertaining and relatable for students. To that end, clips from “The Bachelor” are excellent resources for teaching numerous communication concepts that have proven successful in various iterations of basic communication courses. The show hilariously demonstrates the causes of and solutions for interpersonal, intrapersonal, and small group communication conflicts, as well as how strategic self-disclosure can form consubstantiality with target audiences. Students find this show’s entertainingly memorable clips very illustrative of course concepts. For instance, Tiara from the 2013 “Bachelor” season

demonstrates interpersonal conflict in her numerous fights with other contestants. Similarly, when the contestants exited the limousine to meet Sean Lowe for the first time, the importance of making a good first impression (i.e. in job interviews and speech introductions), interpersonal relationships, and strategic self-disclosure and narratives, are highlighted as crucial communication tools. Thus, this G.I.F.T.S. presentation highlights several ways in which “The Bachelor” is a helpful resource for teaching Basic Communication Course concepts.

**Rationale:** Using “The Bachelor” to explain communication concepts addresses three common issues with teaching basic course material. First, certain concepts can be tricky terrain for instructors since required textbooks are often outdated and treat intercultural material in clumsy, vaguely offensive ways that can repel students. The show allows for a discussion of these issues in entertaining and substantive ways by focusing on self-disclosure. Second, as Bolkan and Goodboy<sup>1</sup> argue, transformational leadership in the classroom can increase student engagement, effort, and retention of course material. Showing clips from the show helps foster the charisma and energy instrumental in creating transformational leadership as an instructor. Third, when students fail to see how communication concepts relate to their daily lives, they are less likely to be engaged and to remember the material. Presenting course concepts through the funny and entertaining lens of “The Bachelor” connects basic course material with daily social interactions and popular culture, increasing student engagement.

### **Required materials:**

- A projector and access to the Internet. It is absolutely possible, however, to only refer to the show without actually showing clips in class to convey these results. The activities listed below for the G.I.F.T.S. presentation, for instance, do not require any technology.
- A whiteboard or chalkboard

*I offer two example activities here to demonstrate how to present course concepts using clips from “The Bachelor.” However, I contend that there are as many ways to use the show as a teaching tool as there are date cards in Chris Harrison’s briefcase!*

### **Activity One: Tiara loses her sparkle!**

#### **Procedure:**

1. Explain the “Forming/Norming/Storming/Performing stages of Tuckman’s group development.
2. Show this clip (or describe it) of Tiara fighting with other contestants in Sean Lowe’s season: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KhR3LDUp3s>
3. Put students into four groups and ask them to break down the clip based on Tuckman’s stages. For instance, while watching the clip a second time, one group will look for evidence that this conflict represents the “forming” stage, while another tries to make a case for the “storming” stage, etc.
4. The groups present to the class their best evidence for why this group was in their particular stage. Groups also present one suggestion for alleviating this group tension.
5. \*\*\*This activity and clip work also well when discussing various levels of group conflict\*\*\*

### **Activity Two: Are you here for the Right Reasons?**

#### **Procedure:**

1. Discuss making a good first impression. This can be in the context of a job interview or a social interaction like a first date. Outline what strategic self-disclosure is, especially in terms of culture.

2. Show this clip (or describe it) of the “limo arrivals” from Sean Lowe’s season:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfpjmP5qtIs>
3. Draw a tournament bracket (think a “March Madness” competition) on the board, and pair students up into two-person matchups.
4. One at a time, students come up to the front of the room and present one aspect about themselves that they think would make a good impression. The class votes on whom in the two-person bracket matchup had the most compelling use of strategic self-disclosure, and the winner “advances” in the tournament.
5. Repeat until one person wins and is awarded the “First Impression” rose

**Connection to concepts, theory, and/or skills and student learning outcomes:** Using “The Bachelor” relies on the assumption that students learn course concepts quicker and retain more of the material if they are engaged in the lesson. If students are having fun, their test scores—and the entire classroom dynamic—will improve. By turning the understanding and quick-recall of the material into a friendly competition, students are offered an incentive to participate in their own education. Moreover, since students are presenting material about themselves, it also works as an excellent “getting to know you” activity at the beginning of the term. These clips illustrate interpersonal, intrapersonal, and small group communication, group conflict, intercultural communication, and the value of energy and enthusiasm, especially when dealing with communication apprehension. All of this material is presented in a fun and entertaining way that students enjoy.

**Typical results:** Students love watching clips from “The Bachelor!” Having incorporated clips from the show into dozens of lessons, I can say with confidence that it is a springboard for great activities! Even when used as an “In Case of Emergency, Break Glass!” activity to fill up class time when a planned lesson finished early, clips from “The Bachelor” work well because they require so little instructor preparation time—simply showing an entertaining clip and asking students to view it through the lens of the day’s material usually works. Moreover, students tend to think it is hilarious that their instructor watches reality TV, and without fail every class has a handful of dedicated fans of the show who I bond with over out shared opinions over certain contestants. Even beyond the Basic Course, Dana Cloud demonstrates that there is a lot of even deeper social and political levels at work that are also worthy of discussion, and the show offers an avenue to explore those topics.<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Bolkan, San, and Alan K. Goodboy. "Transformational Leadership in the Classroom: Fostering Student Learning, Student Participation, and Teacher Credibility." *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 36, no. 4 (2009): 296-306.

<sup>ii</sup> Cloud, Dana. "The Irony Bribe and Reality Television: Investment and Detachment in the Bachelor." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 5 (2010): 413-437.