

## Lesson Five: Recognizing Generational Differences in the Workplace

With people working longer and changing jobs more often, a workplace can be home to as many as five generations. How does this affect the workforce? How do multigenerational coworkers get along? What if they see the world differently or have different work habits and styles? Recognizing differences caused by generational issues is the first step in better communication and reconciliation of styles. In this lesson, participants will examine differences in work attitudes among generations.

### STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- **North Carolina Essential Standards Guidance**  
RED.SE.2 Understand the relationship between self and others in the broader world.  
RED.SE.2.2 Understand how to support positive relationship building (e.g., managing impulsivity, adaptability, and flexibility).
- **North Carolina Professional Career Development Coordinator Standards**  
Standard IV.b Help students develop global employability skills.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

- 20 CFR Parts 676, 677, and 678: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Programs are based on eligibility.

### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

*At the close of the lesson, learners will be able to say... I can:*

- Recognize titles given by sociologists to identify generational similarities.
- Evaluate my own work habits and compare them with generational tendencies.
- Recognize work habits of other generations and use this information to improve communication.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Computer, projector, internet access, YouTube Access
- Multigenerational chart for each participant
- What Generation Am I?: A Personality Quiz for each participant
- Generational comparison chart

## DELIVERY SUGGESTIONS

The suggested time for the following lesson is 90 minutes (depending on participation and size of group. Label generational meeting places within room before beginning lesson. Maximum recommended number of participants is 25.

The following lesson is appropriate for:

- high school students.
- adult learners.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. State and share **I can** statements with participants, so they will know the purpose of the lesson.
2. **SAY:** *“How many of you know the song “My Generation”? Who is it by? (The Who). Your knowledge and preference for songs is one factor that makes you identify with a certain generation. Do you know what generation you belong to? Have you ever heard of anyone being called an “old soul” or a “young whippersnapper”? Phrases, terms, and jargon can also reveal your generation. In today’s workplace, there can be multiple generations working side by side. There may be differences in attitude, work habit, communication preferences and expectations. Let’s begin today by taking a short quiz to see what generation we might belong to.”* Pass out page 1 of What Generation Am I quiz (or project and have people answer on their own paper, if copy numbers are limited).
3. After the quiz, pass out page two and discuss results. Do people agree with them? Obviously, the answers are stacked so they can be given values. Do you agree that all A’s are characteristics of Traditionalists? All B’s of Baby Boomers? Etc.
4. **SAY:** “There are multiple names for generations and sometimes dates do not align. We will be using the chart I am passing out now, but if you know other names, you may write them under the titles. Let’s read the following chart together by playing a game. Let’s rearrange based on our generation, for example all the boomers sit here..., all the Gen x sit here (**if you feel your audience may be offended or your audience is homogeneous, you may assign people to represent different groups and sit together.**) I am going to project the image and quickly move down the column. Then your group may weigh in on if you agree or disagree with the chart when YOUR generation is being discussed. For example, the Gen Xers may weigh in on how Gen Xers are portrayed in the chart. Remind participants that there is no exact list that encompasses every person. These charts are based on perceptions.

5. **SAY:** *“Let’s watch this video which will reinforce some of the information we discussed on the chart. While you are watching, jot down 1 thing each generation could teach another generation or 1 thing you believe each generation is best at.”*  
**<https://tinyurl.com/gendiffer1>**  
Compile everyone’s information into one chart and discuss as you go.
6. **SAY:** *“Now that you know more about different generations, let’s imagine a workplace that includes all 5 generations.”* Pass out the multigenerational chart (circles). *“On this sheet, I want you to write your generation on the line. In the rectangle, write one work skill you are particularly good at (you may need to discuss and give suggestions). How would you teach this skill or use this skill to teach each generation?”* You may want to do one together as an example. Have participants complete the worksheet and share out, if time permits.
7. **SAY:** *“The purpose of today’s session was to feel more comfortable in an intergenerational workplace and to value coworkers instead of focusing on differences. Let’s evaluate how well we accomplished this. I will read the **I can** statement. In front of your chest, give me a thumbs up or down to show me agree or disagree with the statement.”* Reread **I can** statements. You may choose to end with the following comic video:  
**<https://tinyurl.com/babyboomgen>**
8. To receive formal feedback, share the link below under participant evaluation.  
**<https://conta.cc/3Cx9sSO>**

**Sources:**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JADG4hXaqy4> Ellen Degeneres Show May 5, 2016
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmgzgfJl40hQ> How to manage five generations in the workplace, Bython Media, Dec. 6, 2018
- Multigenerational Chart , KP Companies, Sept. 7, 2017
- Personality Quiz, sources listed on page 2 of handout

**LESSON CONTRIBUTOR**

**Christina Harris**

(Retired)

NC Department of Public Instruction

**[cjlharris.ch@gmail.com](mailto:cjlharris.ch@gmail.com)**



# WHICH

# Generation Am I?

## *A Personality Quiz*

As of 2010, there are 4 different working generations who comprise today's workplace: *Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials or Generation Y*. Please keep in mind that not every person fits all of the characteristics of his/her generation's description. Do you think that you fit the characteristics of your defined generation? Take this quiz developed by graduate student T. Sesangthong of the University of Denver—University College in 2009 to see which generation fits you the most. After you have done with the quiz, turn over the paper and add up your point totals to see which generation fits you best.

1. If you have to contact a customer, which type of communication do you prefer the most?
  - a) Face-to-Face communication
  - b) Through e-mail
  - c) By phone
  - d) Texting your customer
2. Which type of reward motivates you the most?
  - a) Money
  - b) Vacation
  - c) Title and recognition
  - d) Compensation in a job done well
3. What's important to you?
  - a) Your experience is respected
  - b) Do it your way and forget the rules
  - c) Being valued and needed in your workplace
  - d) Working with other bright and creative people
4. Which type of leadership style belongs to you?
  - a) Chain of command
  - b) Self command
  - c) Collaborate
  - d) Top-down style of management
5. Which best describes your interactive style?
  - a) Individual
  - b) Entrepreneur
  - c) Participative
  - d) Team player
6. As a teenager, you...
  - a) Rebelled and challenged authority
  - b) Respected your parents
  - c) Friends were more important than family
  - d) Counted on your parents for advice and guidance
7. How often do you want feedback?
  - a) All the time
  - b) During a performance review
  - c) Feedback is not necessary
  - d) Just enough to let me know that I am on the right track
8. You're loyalty is toward...
  - a) The organization
  - b) Your individual goals
  - c) People or projects
  - d) The importance and meaning of work
9. How often do you use computer for personal use?
  - a) Everyday
  - b) Just use at work is enough for me
  - c) Seldom
  - d) Cannot live with out
10. How do you feel about work and money?
  - a) Work should be meaningful, and money should be spent on something you love
  - b) Work should be short, so you can get on to your true interests. Money is not all that important
  - c) Work should be as fun as possible. Life is short, so enjoy your money
  - d) Work hard to be financially secure, and do not waste your money

*Now turn over your paper to score your results!*



# Generation Personality Quiz:

## Scoring The Results

Now that you have completed the quiz, it is time to score and interpret your results. For each question asked, every choice has a point value. Please identify your point values for the selections you made. Then add up your total points and compare it with what generation you fall into. Descriptions of each of the 4 work generations is located below the graph.

Would you like to try a similar quiz online? Then check out this link: <http://projects.usatoday.com/news/generations/quiz/>

Point Value By Letter

	Selection (A, B, C, D)	Point Value	A	B	C	D
1.			1	2	3	4
2.			3	4	2	1
3.			1	3	2	1
4.			2	3	4	1
5.			1	3	4	2
6.			2	1	3	4
7.			4	2	1	3
8.			1	3	4	2
9.			3	2	4	1
10.			2	3	4	1
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b> (Add Questions 1—10)						

### If you score 10-25: You belong in the Traditionalist Generation

You fit best with people born between 1922 – 1945. You are a person of high values and character. Family, your country, loyalty and hard work are all important to you. You are willing to do the right thing when it is difficult. *As of the 2000 Census, 63 million (or 23%) of Traditionalists comprise the American workforce.*

### If you score 25-30: You belong in the Baby Boomer Generation

You fit in best with people born between 1945 – 1964. You are optimistic and rebellious. You believe that you will change the world. You detest authority and rules. You are also team players and serviced-oriented. *As of the 2000 Census, 78 million (or 29%) of Baby Boomer's comprise the American workforce.*

### If you score 31-35: You belong in Generation X

You fit best with people born between 1965—1980. You are fun, laid back and very independent. You are willing to take risks and live your life however you see it fit. In addition, you are casual, accepting and friendly, which make you see everyone as equal. *As of the 2000 Census, 48 million (or 18%) of Generation X comprise the American workforce.*

### If you score 36-40: You belong in Generation Y (also known as the Millennials)

You fit best with people born between 1981–2000. You are cooperative, flexible, techno savvy and adaptable. You know that world changes quickly, and you are eager to change with it. Moreover, you are socially responsible, forward thinking and open-minded. *As of the 2000 Census, 80 million (or 30%) of Millennials comprise the American workforce.*

My Generation Is....

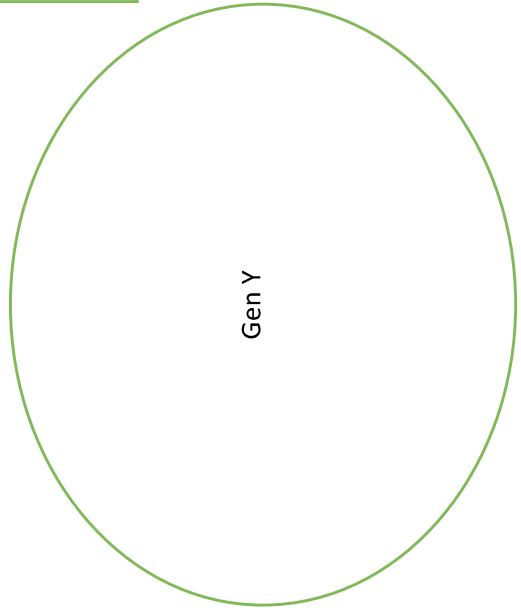
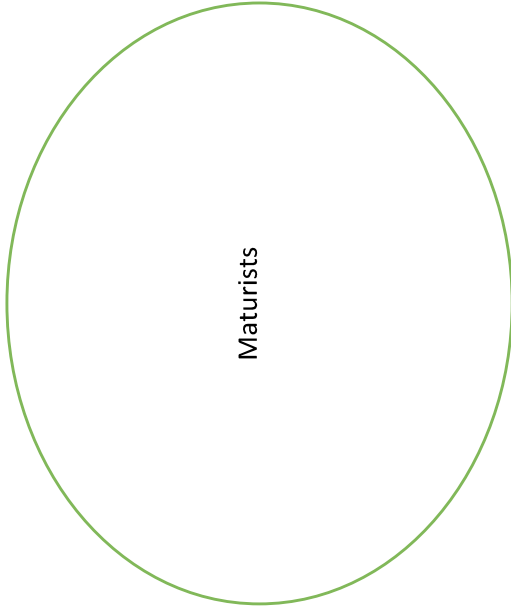
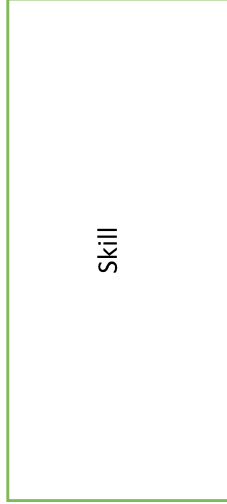
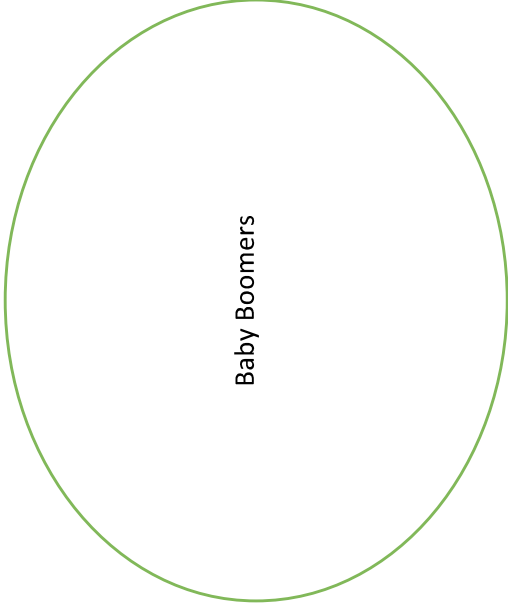
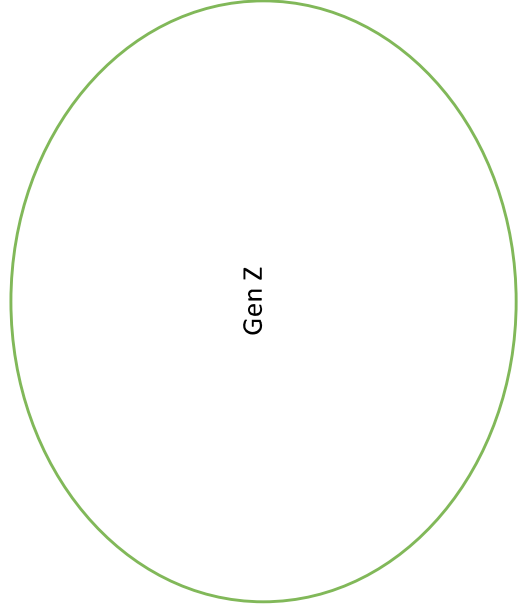
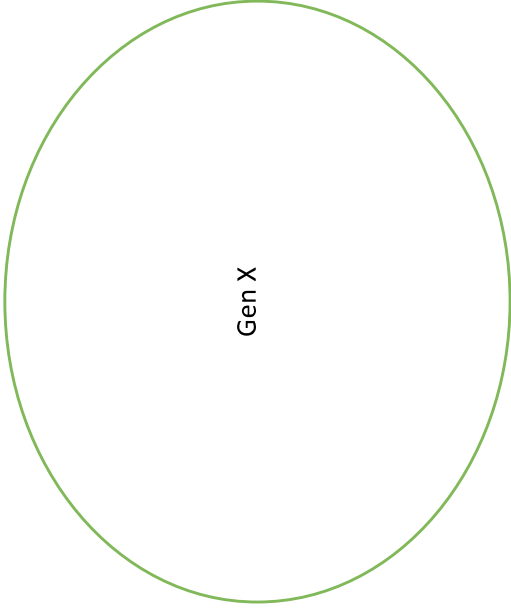






















Chart 1: An overview of the working generations

Characteristics	Maturists (pre-1945)	Baby Boomers (1945-1960)	Generation X (1961-1980)	Generation Y (1981-1995)	Generation Z (Born after 1995)
Formative experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Second World War</li> <li>Raboning</li> <li>Fixed-gender roles</li> <li>Rock 'n' Roll</li> <li>Nuclear families</li> <li>Defined gender roles — particularly for women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cold War</li> <li>Post-War boom</li> <li>"Swinging Sixties"</li> <li>Apollo Moon landings</li> <li>Youth culture</li> <li>Woodstock</li> <li>Family-orientated</li> <li>Rise of the teenager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>End of Cold War</li> <li>Fall of Berlin Wall</li> <li>Reagan / Corbachiev</li> <li>Thatcherism</li> <li>Live Aid</li> <li>Introduction of first PC</li> <li>Early mobile technology</li> <li>Latch-key kids; rising levels of divorce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/11 terrorist attacks</li> <li>PlayStation</li> <li>Social media</li> <li>Invasion of Iraq</li> <li>Reality TV</li> <li>Google Earth</li> <li>Quasstonbury</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic downturn</li> <li>Global warming</li> <li>Global focus</li> <li>Mobile devices</li> <li>Energy crisis</li> <li>Arab Spring</li> <li>Produce own media</li> <li>Cloud computing</li> <li>Wiki-leaks</li> </ul>
Percentage in U.K. workforce*	30%	33%	35%	29%	
Aspiration	Home ownership	Job security	Work-life balance	Freedom and flexibility	Security and stability
Attitude toward technology	Largely disengaged	Early information technology (IT) adaptors	Digital Immigrants	Digital Natives	"Technoholics" — entirely dependent on IT; limited grasp of alternatives
Attitude toward career	Jobs are for life	Organisational — careers are defined by employers	Early "portfolio" careers — loyal to profession, not necessarily to employer	Digital entrepreneurs — work "with" organisations not "for"	Career multitaskers — will move seamlessly between organisations and "pop-up" businesses
Signature product	 Automobile	 Television	 Personal Computer	 Tablet/Smart Phone	 Hand-held (or integrated into clothing) communication devices
Communication media	 Formal letter	 Telephone	 E-mail and text message	 Text or social media	 Facetime
Communication preference	 Face-to-face	 Face-to-face ideally, but telephone or email if required	 Text messaging or e-mail	 Online and mobile (text messaging)	 Face-to-face
Preference when making financial decisions	 Face-to-face meetings	 Face-to-face ideally, but increasingly will go online	 Online — would prefer face-to-face if time permitting	 Face-to-face	 Solutions will be digitally crowd-sourced

\*Percentages are approximate at the time of publication.