

Essential Employability Skills



Remember, essential skills are the skills that will help you become more successful, so you really need to understand what they mean.

Understanding Essential Skills

As we continue, it is important to understand the concept of **essential skills**. These are the skills that you develop as you move through life. At this stage in life, while you are in high school, the interactions that you are having in your courses are developing aspects of these essential skills.

The skills that you are developing and perfecting right now will actually help in the workplace long after you have finished high school. So while you are earning credits to graduate, the approaches and interactions in the classroom are really helping you develop skills that you will be able to transfer into the workplace later on.

Essential school skills



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Essential Employability Skills



Essential Skills

Essential Skills are the skills people use to carry out a wide variety of everyday life and work tasks.

Essential Skills are not the technical skills required by particular occupations but rather the skills applied in all occupations. For example, writing skills are required in a broad range of occupations. The complexity and frequency of writing varies, of course. Some workers fill out simple forms every day, while others write daily or monthly reports.

Essential Skills enable people to do their work. For example, repair persons may have to read and understand written work orders before they can do the repairs.

Essential Skills are enabling skills that:

1. Help people perform the tasks required by their occupation and other activities of daily life.
2. Provide people with a foundation to learn other skills.
3. Enhance people's ability to adapt to change.

There are nine Essential Skills:

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Working with Others
- Continuous Learning
- Thinking Skills
- Computer Use

10 Myths We Shouldn't Believe About Essential Skills

Myth #1: You either have an Essential Skill or you don't.

There are varying levels of complexity for each Essential Skill, ranging from level one (lowest) to level five (highest). For example, a person possesses a certain degree of literacy; he or she is not simply literate or illiterate. This concept is applied to all nine Essential Skills.

Myth #2: Employers don't have to be concerned about Essential Skills if their employees are already functioning well in their jobs.

The evolving global knowledge-based economy requires lifelong-learning. Companies also need to keep pace with change in order to remain competitive. Employers who continually invest in their employees are better equipped to respond to the demands of the knowledge-based economy. For example, a company might win a new contract to produce a product but will need its

employees to learn the new specifications quickly. Ensuring that employees have the Essential Skills necessary to learn new technical skills will help facilitate this transition.

Myth #3: If there's a problem with basic skills in Canada, it's because of our high level of immigration.

Most of the immigrants who come to Canada are highly skilled professionals and investors. In 2001, approximately 55 per cent of the 250, 346 new immigrants who came to Canada were classified as skilled workers. Immigrants are vital contributors to the Canadian economy, and it is forecast that by 2011 immigration will be our only source of net labour force growth.

Myth #4: If you can hide it, a lack of Essential Skills will not affect your life.

The reality is that there is a greater chance of unemployment and reduced income associated with low skill levels. Essential Skills are used in almost all aspects of daily life (e.g. counting change for bus fare, or reading a prescription). It is very difficult to hide a lack of Essential Skills.

Myth #5: It is a better investment to train the best and forget the rest.

Employees with low levels of education are significantly less likely to receive training than the well-educated, even though they are often the ones most in need. With future demographics and workplace demands, employers need to create opportunities so that every employee can participate in workplace training. Ensuring that all employees have the necessary workplace skills is a good investment for an employer. It provides an opportunity to take advantage of "untapped potential". Governments and employers need to focus on increasing the participation of those who have been excluded from the labour market. Every Canadian has an important part to play in ensuring that we have a productive economy.

Myth #6: Employers who hire graduates only don't have to worry.

Many high school, college and university graduates lack the Essential Skills and management skills that most employers seek. For example, an engineer might have exceptional technical skills but may lack the communication skills necessary to convey information to building contractors. It is important to note that some people with little formal schooling can acquire sophisticated Essential Skills outside of school through life experience, personal initiative, or in the workplace.

Myth #7: There are only and will only ever be nine Essential Skills.

The Essential Skills Research Project examined a number of skills of which researchers in the former Government of Canada department, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, selected nine for study. These nine were selected because they are identifiable, definable, common, (though varying in form between occupations), and are susceptible to influence through relatively short training interventions. While there are currently only nine Essential Skills selected, more may be added as research continues by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Myth #8: Essential Skills research is done only on low-skill level occupations.

Essential Skills research began with entry-level occupations. Work is underway to create profiles for all occupations by 2006. It is equally important for employees in high-skill occupations to have strong Essential Skills. For example, a doctor might have to use the Essential Skill of "Oral Communication" to ease a worried patient.

Myth #9: Essential Skills are the same as Employability Skills.

These skills are similar but are not the same. Essential Skills include complexity levels and occupational profiles, which can be used to provide a wide range of information to trainers, employers, and learners. The Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills include other factors, such as attitudes and behaviours, which are also very important for employees. The two are similar in that they both contain a set of skills considered necessary for employees to function well in the workplace.

Myth #10: Employers shouldn't have to train employees. This is the responsibility of schools.

An increased emphasis on workplace training is necessary because more than half of the workforce of 2015 is already in the rapidly changing labour market. Learning at work is essential for an adaptable, appropriately skilled workforce, given the evolving knowledge-based economy. Moreover, if an individual does not use a skill mastered in the classroom, it can atrophy. Accordingly, when an employer wishes to develop his or her staff, Essential Skills need to be part of the consideration.