

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_ . 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. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**There are nine Essential Skills:**

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Working with Others
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Thinking Skills
- Computer Use

## 10 Myths We Shouldn't Believe About Essential Skills

**Myth #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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 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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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.

## Essential Skills

### Reading Text

**Reading Text** refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs.

**Reading Text** generally involves reading notes, letters, memos, manuals, specifications, regulations, books, reports or journals.

**Reading Text** includes:

- forms and labels if they contain *at least one paragraph*;
- print and non-print media (for example, texts on computer screens and microfiche);
- paragraph-length text in charts, tables and graphs.

### Numeracy

**Numeracy** refers to the workers' use of numbers and their being required to think in quantitative terms.

## Document Use

**Document Use** refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics (eg., line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. For example, graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs and labels are documents used in the world of work.

If a document includes a paragraph of text such as on a label or a completed form, it is also included in *A. Reading Text*. Documents requiring the entry of words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs are also included in *C. Writing*.

**Document Use** includes:

- print and non-print media (for example, computer screen or microfiche documents, equipment gauges, clocks and flags);
- reading/interpreting and writing/completing/producing of documents—these two uses of documents often occur simultaneously as part of the same task, e.g., completing a form, checking off items on a list of tasks, plotting information on a graph, and entering information on an activity schedule.

**Writing** includes:

- writing texts and writing in documents (for example, filling in forms)
- non-paper-based writing (for example, typing on a computer)

## Oral Communication

**Oral Communication** pertains primarily to the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information by workers in an occupational group.

## Thinking Skills

**Thinking Skills** differentiates between five different types of cognitive functions. However, these functions are interconnected.

## Computer Use

**Computer Use** indicates the variety and complexity of computer use within the occupational group.

## Continuous Learning

**Continuous Learning** examines the requirement for workers in an occupational group to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge.

**Continuous Learning** tests the hypothesis that more and more jobs require continuous upgrading, and that all workers must continue learning in order to keep or to grow with their jobs.

If this is true, then the following will become essential skills:

- knowing how to learn;
- understanding one's own learning style; and
- knowing how to gain access to a variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities.

### **Description of Learning**

This description, in the form of an **untitled paragraph** at the beginning of the Continuous Learning section in each Essential Skills Profile, outlines the ongoing learning or skills upgrading that is required in the occupational group. This description may include the following types of learning:

- training in job-related health and safety;
- obtaining and updating credentials; and
- learning about new equipment, procedures, products and services.

## **Working with Others**

**Working with Others** examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks. Do they have to work co-operatively with others? Do they have to have the self-discipline to meet work targets while working alone.

### **Description of Work Context**

This description, in the form of an **untitled paragraph** at the beginning of the Working with Others section in each Essential Skills Profile, outlines the ways in which workers interact with one another to carry out their tasks. This section covers **four types of work contexts**. Knowing whether workers work alone, independently, with partners or as team members will help readers understand the skills workers use in their jobs.

As well, this section provides an idea of the variety of work interactions found within an occupational group. Workers may work independently most of the time, but work with partners in certain circumstances. For example, "Longshoremen work independently when operating forklifts in the yards but work with partners to load cargo into the hold of a ship."

### **Types of Work Contexts**

#### **Work alone**

- Employees work alone providing products or information on progress to others.
- Home-based production workers work alone within their home environments.

#### **Work independently**

- Workers are not physically alone but work independently, co-ordinating their work with that of others.
- Receptionists in a large office and production line workers with responsibility for a very specific part of the process are in physical environments that include other workers. However, they work essentially on their own.

**Work jointly with a partner or helper**

- One worker co-ordinates and co-operates with only one other co-worker at a time.
- A tradesperson works with an apprentice.
- A dental assistant works with a dentist.

**Work as a member of a team**

- A team is a group of workers who produce a product or accomplish a task through combined effort and organized co-operation.
- Members of a film crew work together to create a feature film or documentary.

## Essential School Skills = Workplace Essential Skills

Student name:  _____	Group members:  _____  _____
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**Instructions:** Take a look at the table below. In the left hand column you will find descriptions of skills which you are presently working on in school. Follow these steps to complete the activity:

- a) Once you have read through them, you and your group members will answer individually the question at the top of the right column for each of the ten skill areas.
- b) Then in the group collaboration area you will combine your answers with the answers from your group members.
- c) The group will then submit a final copy of this chart, combining the ideas from all group members.

<b>School Related Essential Skills</b>	
<b>School Related Skills</b>	<b>How do these skills help you in the workplace?</b>
<b>Communication skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Giving class presentations</li> <li>▪ Reading articles and books</li> <li>▪ Writing essays, short stories, and poetry.</li> </ul>	
<b>Teamwork skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Getting along with others</li> <li>▪ Working with others on projects</li> <li>▪ Participating in extracurricular activities (e.g., band, basketball, clubs)</li> </ul>	
<b>Time management skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Doing homework</li> <li>▪ Meeting project deadlines</li> <li>▪ Scheduling your day</li> <li>▪ Getting to class on time</li> </ul>	



<p><b>Problem-solving skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Analysing information</li> <li>▪ Understanding problems</li> <li>▪ Defining problems</li> <li>▪ Solving problems</li> <li>▪ Applying results</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Organizational skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Taking notes</li> <li>▪ Following written and oral instructions</li> <li>▪ Keeping binders of information</li> <li>▪ Following a schedule</li> <li>▪ Setting priorities and goals</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Learning skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Asking questions</li> <li>▪ Reading information</li> <li>▪ Using the library</li> <li>▪ Researching information</li> <li>▪ Joining activities and clubs</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Computer skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Keyboarding</li> <li>▪ Word-processing</li> <li>▪ Using database programs</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Listening skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attending classes</li> <li>▪ Taking notes</li> <li>▪ Visualizing what you hear</li> <li>▪ Comprehending information</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Creativity skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learning how others have been creative</li> <li>▪ Using your imagination</li> <li>▪ Trying new ways to do things</li> <li>▪ Looking at issues from a different point of view</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Leadership skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leading projects</li> <li>▪ Being on sports teams</li> <li>▪ Volunteering as a peer helper</li> </ul>	

**Essential Skills Group Work**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Level 1 (50 - 59%)</b>	<b>Level 2 (60 - 69%)</b>	<b>Level 3 (70 - 79%)</b>	<b>Level 4 (80 - 100%)</b>
<b>Thinking</b>  <b>Uses critical and creative thinking skills</b>  /10	Uses critical and creative thinking skills with limited effectiveness	Uses critical and creative thinking skills with some effectiveness	Uses critical and creative thinking skills with considerable effectiveness	Uses critical and creative thinking skills with a high degree of effectiveness
<b>Application</b>  <b>Makes connections between school skills and workplace essential skills</b>  /10	Makes limited connections between school skills and workplace essential skills	Makes some connections between school skills and workplace essential skills	Makes considerable connections between school skills and workplace essential skills	Makes thorough connections between school skills and workplace essential skills

/20

**COMMENTS**