

Workplace Basics: Skills Employers Want

Sources: The American Society for Training and Development
and the U.S. Department of Labor

Beyond Basic Skills

A few years ago, basic skills meant reading, writing, and arithmetic. Now those skills are just a starting point. Take a look at the basic skills needed today in the workplace.

<i>Learning to Learn</i>	Workers need the ability to acquire new information and skills and apply them to their jobs.
<i>Listening</i>	Important for more than just following supervisors' instructions, good listening skills help workers understand the concerns of coworkers, suppliers, and customers.
<i>Oral Communications</i>	Workers must be able to respond clearly to concerns of their coworkers, customers, and suppliers.
<i>Critical Thinking</i>	Workers need the ability to evaluate the idea or thought.
<i>Problem Solving</i>	New styles of work organization will require all workers to analyze problems and come up with solutions.
<i>Creative Thinking</i>	The more flexible work becomes, the more creative workers' solutions will have to become — creative in the sense of originality of thought or imagination.
<i>Self-Esteem</i>	Supervisors told the researchers they want workers who are proud of themselves and their abilities.
<i>Goal Setting/Motivation</i>	Workers need the ability to set objectives and the persistence to achieve them.
<i>Personal and Career Development</i>	Ideally, companies hire workers for the long haul. The most valuable employees are those who understand the need to continually develop on the job.
<i>Computer Knowledge</i>	Workers need to be able to use electronic mail applications, Internet applications, publication applications, and other applications related to their position.

Career Activity File — Employability Skills

<i>Interpersonal Skills</i>	New employees must be able to get along with their suppliers, coworkers, and customers.
<i>Teamwork</i>	People in cooperative work teams need to know how to divide work equitably and effectively and work with one another to achieve team goals.
<i>Negotiation</i>	Workers need the ability to build consensus through give and take with their customers, coworkers, and supervisors.
<i>Organizational Effectiveness</i>	To be productive, employees must understand the company's business goals and how their jobs contribute to fulfilling those goals.
<i>Leadership</i>	Workers must be able to assume responsibility and direct their coworkers when necessary.
<i>Competence in Writing</i>	Workers must be able to examine, analyze, and merge information to communicate clearly the important points in writing.
<i>Competence in Computation</i>	Employees who can accurately use common mathematical concepts related to their work will be in high demand.
<i>Competence in Reading</i>	Employees need the ability to locate information and use thinking skills to understand the meaning of the written word.

Employability skills are the attributes of employees, other than technical competence, that makes them an asset to the employer.

Buck and Barrick, 1987

Source: Career Development Activities, Mid High / High School CS1102. Order by calling 1-800-654-4502.

Developing Employability Skills

Kathleen Cotton

Many researchers offer recommendations for increasing students' and workers' acquisition of employability skills.

These recommendations are drawn from Berryman 1988, 1989; Bhaerman and Spill 1988; Greathouse 1986; Kazis and Barton 1993; Lankard 1990; Neal 1983; SCANS 1992; Spill and Tracy 1992; Stasz, et al. 1990, 1993; VEW 1993; and Wentling 1987b.

Teachers:

1. Arrange the classroom in such a way that it replicates key features of actual work settings, and assign students tasks similar to those performed by workers in those settings.
2. Reinforce to students that employers value basic, higher-order, and affective employability skills highly — even more highly than job-specific technical skills.
3. Communicate to students that they have the ability to perform tasks successfully and that they are expected to do so; provide monitoring and encouragement to help them achieve success.
4. Demand good behavior in the classroom. This conveys high expectations and familiarizes students with workplace norms.
5. Express work values through classroom instruction. Model attention to quality, thoroughness, and a positive attitude.
6. Use democratic instructional strategies such as role playing/simulation, problem-solving exercises, and group discussion with students; keep the use of lectures and reward structures to a minimum.
7. Monitor and support students' work as a consultant or master craftsman would, relating to them as intelligent, promising employees and providing them guidance and feedback.
8. Adapt instructional strategies to the tasks being taught and to the students performing them; do not hold rigidly to texts or syllabi.
9. Individualize instruction as much as possible, making use of a range of materials in different media in response to students' differing learning styles.
10. Reach agreements with supervisors at learning sites so that the importance of employability skill development will be emphasized at both school and the workplace.
11. Help students build employability "profiles" or "portfolios" that provide a more accurate picture of the students' command of the skills and traits employers value.
12. Participate in professional development activities and/or enroll in classes that emphasize methods to teach employability skills.

Source: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. "Developing Employability Skills" [Online] July 2003. <<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/8/c015.html>>.

Eight Keys to Employability

1. Personal Values

Valued workers:

- Are honest.
- Have good self-esteem and a positive self-image.
- Have personal and career goals.
- Demonstrate emotional stability.
- Exhibit a good attitude.
- Are self-motivated.
- Desire future education.

2. Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills

Valued workers:

- Are flexible.
- Are creative and innovative.
- Can adapt to change.
- Can plan and organize work.
- Can reason and make objective judgments.
- Are multi-skilled.

3. Relations with Other People.

Valued workers:

- Work well with peers.
- Accept constructive criticism.
- Are team workers.
- Are friendly and cooperative.
- Are consistent in their relations with people.
- Accept assignments pleasantly.
- Are tactful.
- Accept all types of people.
- Respect the rights and property of other people.
- Have leadership qualities.

4. Communication Skills

Valued workers:

- Ask questions.
- Seek help when needed.

- Notify supervisors of absences and the reasons for absences.
- Clearly express themselves orally.
- Listen well.

5. Task-Related Skills

Valued workers:

- Complete work on time.
- Can follow oral, visual, written, and multistep directions.
- Are not distracting or distractible.
- Work neatly.
- Stick with task and keep busy.
- Are precise and meticulous.
- Care for tools and materials.
- Are accurate.
- Constantly improve their performance.

6. Maturity

Valued workers:

- Work well without supervision.
- Are reliable and dependable.
- Don't let their personal problems interfere with their work.
- Are willing to perform extra work and work overtime.
- Show pride in their work and show initiative.
- Remain calm and self-controlled.
- Accept responsibility for their own behavior.
- Demonstrate maturity in thought, actions, and deeds.

- Evaluate their own work.
- Use time wisely.
- Are assertive when necessary.
- Show self-confidence.
- Are responsible for their own career path.

7. Health and Safety Habits

Valued workers:

- Observe safety rules.
- Maintain a good work pace and production rate.
- Practice good personal hygiene.
- Dress appropriately and are well groomed.
- Perform well under stress and tension.
- Have appropriate physical stamina and tolerance for the kind of work they are doing.
- Are in good health.

8. Commitment to Job

Valued workers:

- Are punctual and have good attendance records.
- Observe all organization policies.
- Consider their work more than a job.
- Are interested and enthusiastic.
- Want to learn more.
- Exhibit loyalty to the organization and its employees.
- Give their best effort consistently and strive to please.
- Show concern for their future career with the organization.

Source: *Career Development Activities, Mid High / High School CS1102. Order by calling 1-800-654-4502.*

Planning a Team Meeting

Facilitating a team meeting involves many of the employability skills that businesses need. Students are in charge of many club meetings that occur during the school year. Many students are unsure how to lead or plan them. Have students plan a mock team meeting using the following statements to guide them in these procedures.

Team Preparation

- Develop meeting objectives, goals, and agenda.
- Assign responsibilities for preparing materials and leading discussions.
- Schedule meeting.
- Reserve meeting room.
- Invite appropriate personnel.
- Recognize the importance of forming teams with others whose abilities are complementary.
- Assign someone to take minutes of the meeting.

Team Collaboration

- Demonstrate commitment to and positive attitude toward team goals.
- Act as a responsible team member, completing assigned tasks in a timely and effective manner.
- Adapt effectively to changes in projects and work activities.
- Negotiate effectively to arrive at decisions.
- Provide constructive praise and criticism.
- Resolve conflicts.
- Attend scheduled meetings on time.

Meetings Facilitated and Conducted

- Make introductions.
- Set basic standards of conduct for the group.
- Review objectives and time frames with team members.
- Invite questions, comments, and group participation.
- Communicate effectively verbally and non-verbally with team members.
- Conduct meeting to achieve objectives within scheduled time.
- Determine appropriate action, time frame, and person accountable for identified tasks.
- Monitor time.
- Produce and distribute meeting minutes including decisions and next steps.
- Follow up on tasks delegated to others.
- Recognize and reward individual and team contributions.

Techniques for Effective Decision Making for Team Meetings

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TED.htm

The techniques at this Web site will help make the best decisions possible with the information that is available. These decision-making tools provide a starting point in problem solving.

Source: Career Clusters Knowledge and Skills Booklet, National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education, 2003. <http://www.careerclusters.org>

Employability Skills On-Line

Transitions

Transitions is a specific school improvement process that requires schools to be accountable for every student. *Transitions* focuses upon helping students learn about themselves, learn about career possibilities, and then make connections between the two. It is unique in that schools credential students by validating each student's present performance in academics, employability skills, and career awareness/exploration. *Transitions* is a vehicle for schools to meet or exceed the North Central Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement Standard.

<http://www.nca.asu.edu/transitions/>

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405-376-2461

Skills Search

O*NET, the Occupational Information Network, is the Department of Labor's comprehensive database. Its database contains information about employability skills for each job title. To match an occupation, select as many skills as you have or plan to acquire from one or more of the six skill groups.

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_skills_page

On-Line Skill Assessments

A nonscientific assessment will provide scores on interpersonal skills, initiative, and dependability. http://www.coe.uga.edu/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/~rhill/new_owei/esa.pl

Check out this self-assessment on the following employability skills: communication, thinking, learning, attitudes and behaviors, and teamwork.

http://www.apprenticesearch.com/fptrades/profile_result.asp

WorkKeys

The *WorkKeys*® system helps students understand how to improve their skills for higher-paying jobs. *WorkKeys* will measure skills such as reading, math, listening, locating information, and teamwork — skills that employers feel are critical to job success. Taking the *WorkKeys* tests provides information on how to get a better picture of jobs the student is ready for and improve areas where his/her skills are weak. Using the student's individual score reports, along with input from employers, ensures that the school curriculum provides adequate work skills training to meet the needs of businesses. <http://www.act.org/workkeys>

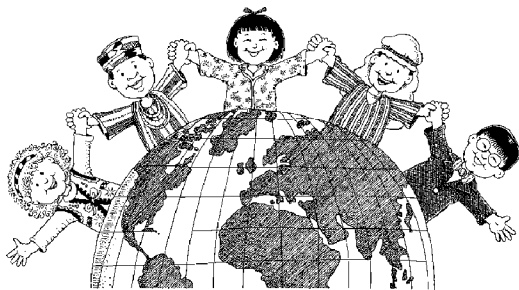
Learning basic employability skills can start as early as kindergarten. Remembering these rules will make your life richer and our world a better place. Copy and cut apart.

Kindergarten Creed

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

By Robert Fulghum (Fulghum 1988)

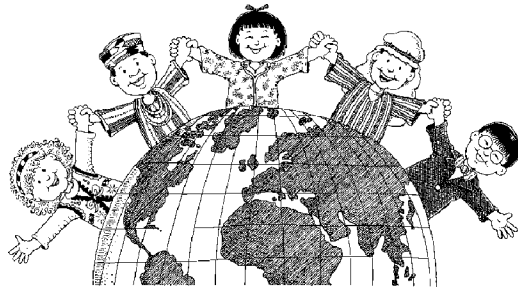
Share everything.
Play fair.
Don't hit people.
Put things back where you found them.
Clean up your own mess.
Don't take things that aren't yours.
Say you're sorry when you hurt
somebody.
Wash your hands before you eat.
Flush.
Warm cookies and cold milk are good
for you.
Live a balanced life — learn some and
think some and draw and paint and sing
and
dance and play and work every day
some.
Take a nap every afternoon.
When you go out into the world, watch
out for traffic, hold hands, and stick
together.
Be aware of wonder.



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Products and Resources

Problem Solving

Grade Level: Junior High

Order Numbers:	In-State Price
TE1100 Teacher Edition	\$7
TE3100 Student Edition	\$8
TE7210 Problem Solving Video	\$10

A systematic approach to problem solving is included in this TLA. Activities include papercut, egg drop package, and tower structure.

The Technology Learning Activities (TLAs) are eight-day activities. Each teacher edition contains background information, expected learner outcomes, suggested activities, suggested resources, instructional sequence, equipment, tools, supplies, pretest/posttest, test answers, and evaluation summary. The student edition of each Technology Learning Activity contains an introduction, summary of daily activities, pretest instructions, assignments to turn in, goals, words to know, expected learner outcomes, and objectives. Some activities include a design-and-build component: a package that will protect an egg from cracking and the tallest structure that will support a tennis ball.

Through the Jungle

Grade Level: High School – Adult

Order Number:	In-State Price
CS9003	\$3

This job search guide for high school and adult students outlines the job search process and covers how to dress, interview, and prepare a resumé, among other skills.

Hands-On Thinking Skills:

Applied Activities for the Twenty-First Century*

Grade Level: High School

Order Number:	In-State Price
TA1213 Teacher Edition (on-site duplication)	\$25

The 18 activities in this book give the instructor an opportunity to focus students' attention on the process of thinking. Students will identify critical issues, analyze problems, draw conclusions, evaluate alternatives, transfer knowledge to new situations, etc. Most of the activities can be performed and completed during one class period, while others require the student to conduct the activity over a period of time.

Employment Skills for the 21st Century

Grade Level: High School – Adult

Order Numbers:	In-State Price
TA1210 Vol. I* – Manual	\$50
TA8210 Vol. I – CD-Rom	\$50
TA8211 Vol. II – CD-Rom	\$50

This product is a collection of activities designed to give students practice in developing and applying in meaningful real-life settings both basic academic skills in reading, writing and computation, and the more advanced higher-order skills of problem solving, critical thinking, group interaction, and oral communication.

Company Name:

Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center (CIMC)

Telephone:

1-800-654-4502

Internet Site:

<http://www.okcareertech.org/cimc>

*Products can be borrowed from the free loan Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education Resource Center, 1-800-743-5163.

Employability Skills

Employers report that the reason employees are dismissed is not their lack of advanced skills, but that they have problems with one or more of the following employability skills:

- a. works well with others
- b. uses time wisely
- c. on time/good attendance
- d. follows directions
- e. respects property of others
- f. responsible

We know that habits which we start in school continue throughout our lives. Remembering that, place the letters of the employability skills that would eliminate the following bad habits.

1. ___ carves name in table
2. ___ complains about the teacher/
boss
3. ___ turns in projects late
4. ___ talks to friends on phone at
work
5. ___ leaves first for lunch/break and
returns last
6. ___ engages in horseplay on job
7. ___ takes supplies home
8. ___ stands around being idle
9. ___ calls in sick when not sick
10. ___ nonverbal communications
11. ___ completes forms without
reading directions
12. ___ argues; ends up working alone
13. ___ doesn't read school/work
handbook
14. ___ stays out late – sleeps in
15. ___ doesn't put tools/equipment
back
16. ___ fails to perform duties
17. ___ sleeps on the job
18. ___ gossips about others
19. ___ records extra hours on time card
20. ___ dresses inappropriately

Related Subject

Language Arts

National Career Development Guidelines

Competency VIII

Knowledge of Skills Necessary to
Seek and Obtain Jobs

Suggested Oklahoma P.A.S.S. Concept

Grades 5-12

Decision-making

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