Canadian Language Benchmarks
Essential Skills

Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens
Compétences essentielles

Language for Work:

CLB and Essential Skills for Job Analysts

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
803 – 200 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 1L5

Phone: (613) 230-7729
Fax: (613) 230-9305
info@language.ca
Web site: www.language.ca

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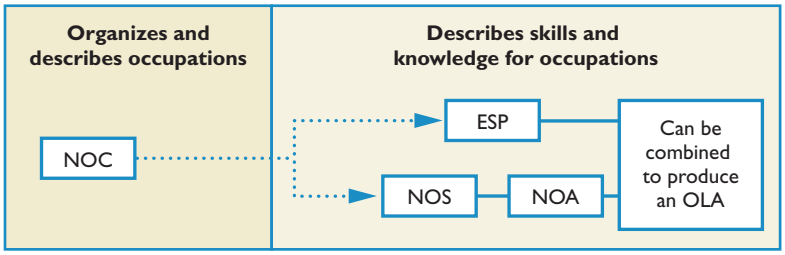
Canada

Contents

Before you Begin

The diagram below illustrates the relationship between products introduced in this guide. For more information about any of these products, see the descriptions and web site links that follow.



ESP – Essential Skills Profiles

ESP describe how each of the nine Essential Skills is used by workers within an occupation. ESP are developed for occupational groups as defined by the NOC. The approximately 250 ESP can be accessed at: http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/home_e.shtml

NOA – National Occupational Analysis

National Occupational Analyses describe and group the tasks performed by skilled workers. They are used to develop Interprovincial Red Seal Examinations and curricula for the certification of skilled workers. NOAs can be accessed at: http://www.red-seal.ca/Site/trades/analist_e.htm

NOC – National Occupational Classification

NOC is the nationally accepted reference that classifies and describes all occupations in the Canadian economy. It organizes over 30,000 job titles into 520 occupational group descriptions. NOC can be accessed at: http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC-CNP/app/index.aspx

NOS – National Occupational Standards

NOS describe the skills and knowledge needed to perform competently at work. NOS may be developed for occupational clusters or occupational groups as defined by the NOC. NOS can be accessed through sector councils. A list of sector councils can be found at: http://www.councils.org/tasc/nav.cfm?s=memblist&p=memdetails&l=e&id=30

Further information about NOS can be found at:
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/hrp/corporate/nos/occstd.shtml

OLA – Occupational Language Analysis

An OLA defines the standard English and French language requirements of an occupation based on the tasks identified in NOS and ESP. It uses the Canadian Language Benchmarks to specify task complexity. To view an OLA, visit: http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display_page.asp?page_id=202

TASC – The Alliance of Sector Councils

TASC is a coordinating body made up of 29 sector councils. Sector councils bring together representatives from business, labour, education and other professional groups in a neutral forum in order to comprehensively and cooperatively analyze and address sector-wide human resource issues. http://www.councils.org/

Introduction

For many employers, the reality of worker shortages and an aging population means an increasing reliance on international workers. Faced with these challenges in the labour market, employers are recognizing their growing role in helping both new recruits and those already employed to develop skills required to enhance both job retention and readiness for promotion.

Job analysts, whose work includes development of Essential Skills Profiles (ESP) and National Occupational Standards (NOS), understand that the products they create help lay the foundation for training and development. The ESP and NOS enumerate key competencies, skill demands, and frequency and complexity levels of tasks performed on the job. The effort that has gone into the development of these products has significantly increased the understanding of occupational demands and skill requirements. More can be done, however.

The purpose of this guide is to help job analysts improve the recording and communicating of language tasks related to occupations, further benefiting all users of these documents. It begins with a brief overview of ESP and NOS research and applications. The information found in the latter half of the guide takes analysts through the language demands of tasks they describe and helps them improve their products to better meet the needs of today's workforce.

Many workers in Canada speak a language other than one of the two official languages, English and French. With their number expected to rise over the next decade, the needs of this group are at the forefront of many recruitment and skills training strategies. While ESP and NOS work goes a long way to identifying the skills and competencies workers should demonstrate on the job, there is currently not enough detail for those who wish to understand occupational language demands. Enhancing the ESP and NOS to meet the needs of second language speakers more effectively, means building on current good practice.

Why do skills matter?

- Employers want to know that current and future workers have the skills and knowledge necessary to work safely and effectively
- Workers want to develop the skills they need to succeed
- Workplace trainers and training institutions want the training they provide to address the interests, needs, concerns and challenges faced by both employers and workers

Why use this guide?

Language for Work: CLB and Essential Skills for Job Analysts gives Essential Skills (ES) analysts and National Occupational Standards developers the strategies needed for enriching reading, writing, document use and oral communication descriptions for occupations. In an occupation, this enhanced data will help educators, trainers and test developers find ways to design, implement and evaluate training related to an occupation.

Consider the following questions:

Do you represent a sector council?	○ Yes	○ No
Are you an NOS developer?	○ Yes	○ No
If yes, are you ever asked how your work is different from Essential Skills Profiles?	○ Yes	○ No
Are you an ESP researcher?	○ Yes	○ No
If yes, are you ever asked how your work is different from National Occupational Standards?	○ Yes	○ No
Have you ever been asked who uses NOS and ESP research?	○ Yes	○ No
Are you interested in learning more about various applications of NOS and ESP research?	○ Yes	○ No
Do you ever have difficulty deciding how much detail to provide in the final product?	○ Yes	○ No
Do you ever speculate about whether the product's end users are missing any key information?	○ Yes	○ No
Have you ever considered the difficulty of the tasks you describe for speakers of English as a Second Language (ESL)?	○ Yes	○ No

If you answered yes to any of these questions, this guide is for you.

Language for Work: CLB and Essential Skills for Job Analysts outlines how to examine and record the language skills in workplace tasks so that trainers, human resource professionals and test developers can, in turn, identify the critical communication skills workers use on the job.

What are National Occupational Standards?

National Occupational Standards identify and group competencies that workers within an occupation or occupational cluster require to perform their work. Developed through industry consultations, and validated with workers and employers alike, NOS describe the skills and knowledge of workers, providing a rich source of information for employers, human resources professionals, and trainers. They are often used in human resources applications, which include the development of employee recruitment and retention strategies, certification, and interprovincial mobility processes.[1]

National Occupational Standards:

- List all occupational tasks required to be considered competent
- Include tasks (sometimes called skills) grouped into general activities within an occupation
- Divide tasks into subtasks
- Define subtasks as knowledge and performance standards

National Occupational Standards can be developed for individual occupations or for occupational groupings which demand similar knowledge and skill sets. Data are collected through interviews with subject matter experts and focus groups, then analyzed, refined and validated under the guidance of a national committee. In addition to competency statements, NOS often provide additional details and contexts collected through situational analyses carried out with workers. These include information about trends affecting job performance, the relative importance of competencies, and the frequency with which competencies are demanded of workers within the occupation.

While models can shift slightly in their emphasis and in the level of detail they provide about context, all NOS follow an approach that classifies tasks and subtasks under competency statements.

The level of detail provided by National Occupational Standards depends largely on the reasons why each standard is created. For example, when used for certification processes, NOS may require less detail than when they are intended to inform the development of job descriptions. Also dependent on the purpose, is whether NOS aim to record minimum competency requirements (e.g. for recruitment) or the requirements of individuals with a high degree of competence in the target occupation (e.g. for certification or interprovincial mobility).[2]

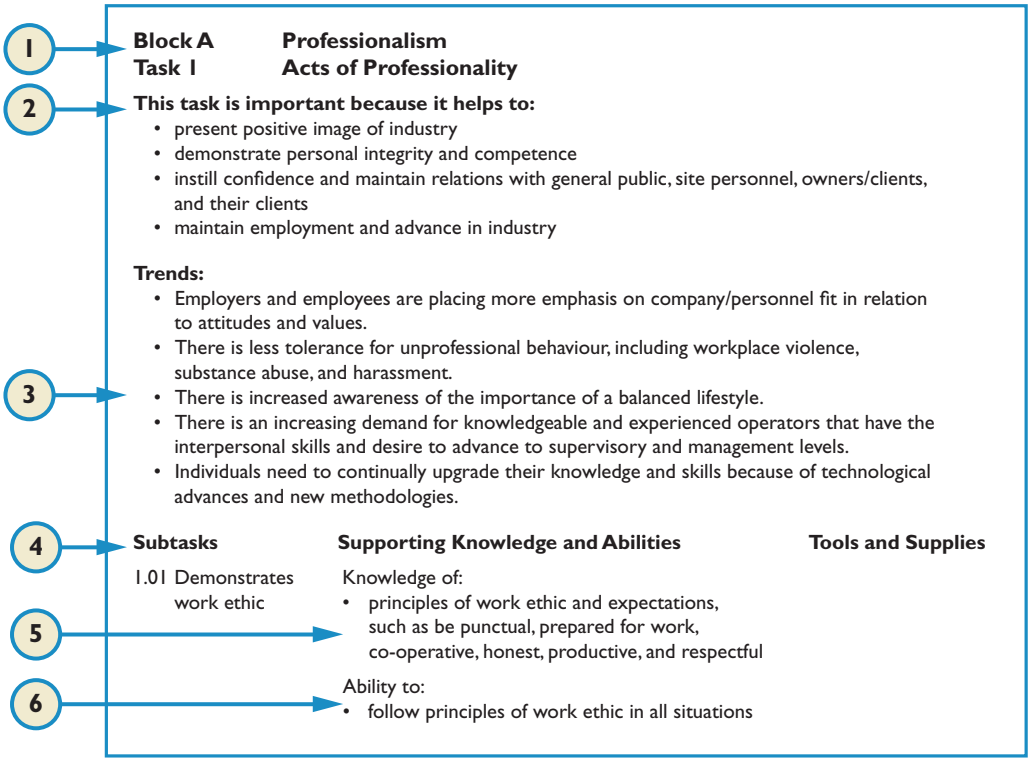
Given the breadth and scope of the NOS process, trainers can address the competencies outlined in NOS, confident that the skills and knowledge described are those required for success on the job.

[1] National Occupational Analyses (NOA) detail the skills and knowledge required by workers in some skilled trades. They differ slightly from NOS in their structure and purpose. For more information about NOA, refer to the Additional Information section on page 1.

[2] Setting the Standard: Accepted Principles and Recommended Practices for National Occupational Standards, Certification Programs, and Accreditation Programs, p. 6.

Anatomy of an NOS

While NOS vary in their format and organization, the breakdown of competencies from task level to subtask(s) and then into their composite knowledge and skill requirements is common across standards documents. Here is one example, from Aggregate Plant Operator[3].



1. Task, under which subtasks are classified. Tasks reflect broad performance standards.
2. Contextual information, describes elements such as purpose and relative importance.
3. Addresses changes likely to affect the way work is carried out, which in turn will affect the skills and knowledge workers need on the job.
4. Specific task demonstration that supports worker in performing broader task.
5. Industry or workplace knowledge required to carry out subtask.
6. Details about how workers carry out the subtask and which skills they use.

[3] *National Occupational Standards for Operating Engineers: Aggregate Plant Operator*, p. 7. Construction Sector Council, 2005.

What are Essential Skills Profiles?

Essential Skills Profiles:

- Provide illustrative, rather than exhaustive, examples of skill use
- Include task examples organized by ES
- Illustrate how and why skills are used
- Use complexity levels to communicate the relative difficulty of task examples

Essential Skills are the generic, transferable and enabling skills that are used in daily life and in all occupations. They not only help people participate fully in their workplace and community, and adapt to change, but also provide a foundation for learning other skills. Essential Skills Profiles capture the skills workers use, in the form of tasks they carry out in real-life work contexts. The result of research carried out across Canada with workers in different occupations, Essential Skills Profiles illustrate the range and complexity of workers' tasks within the nine Essential Skills: Reading Text, Document Use, Writing, Numeracy, Oral Communication, Thinking Skills, Working with Others, Computer Use and Continuous Learning. Within each skill area, example tasks provide details about how skills are used, and in many cases, the purpose of carrying out tasks. While not meant to be an exhaustive catalogue of skills usage, a profile paints a representative portrait of the ways workers use ES within an occupation. It is intended to capture what a competent worker does on the job.

Task examples are organized by skill domain and listed in order from least to most complex. Complexity ratings are assigned from 1 to 4 or 5 depending on the skill domain, using a scale described in the *Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles* and derived from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) for some skills and the Canadian Language Benchmarks[4] for oral communication. Typically, task examples are detailed enough to give the reader an appreciation of tasks themselves, as well as their contexts and purposes and illustrate, where appropriate, which factors increase task complexity. These factors may include workers' level of responsibility, risks associated with the task, and implications for the workers themselves, other workers, their organizations or the public.

In addition to task examples, the profiles also include a brief description of the occupation[5], a list of the most important Essential Skills for the occupation, some information about the physical aspects of the work, and notes about future trends that are likely to affect the Essential Skills required within the occupation.

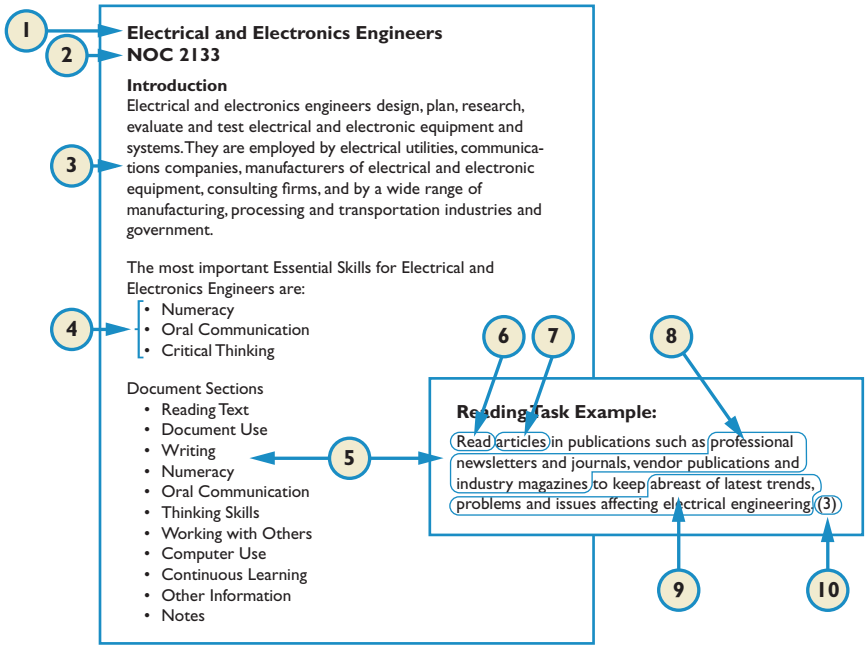
Adult educators, job seekers, employers, and workplace trainers use the profiles to learn how workers use the Essential Skills as they carry out job tasks and to understand the relative complexity of skills required.

[4] P. 2, *Relating Canadian Language Benchmarks to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework*, CCLB, 2005.

[5] The descriptions are taken from the National Occupational Classification (NOC) lead statements. To learn more about the NOC, refer to the Additional Information section at the back of the guide.

Anatomy of an ESP

The following displays Essential Skills Profile elements using content from the Electrical and Electronics Engineers ESP.[6]



Profile sections:

1. Occupational title.
2. National Occupational Classification (NOC) code.
3. Brief description of occupation.
4. Most important Essential Skills for the occupation.
5. List of profile sections, including the list of nine Essential Skills. This is followed by task examples organized within each skill domain. Each task example illustrates the typical ways workers in the occupation use the skills.

Reading example elements[7]:

6. Choice of verb clearly situates which skill the example is illustrating.
7. Describes what is being acted upon, in this case what workers read.
8. Gives examples, often from more than one work context.
9. Provides purpose and context.
10. Identifies the complexity level of the task example.

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[6] *Essential Skills Profile for Electrical and Electronics Engineers – NOC 2133* http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/profiles/233.shtml

[7] While the structure of examples varies across skills, most examples contain these elements.

Applications of NOS and ES Research

One of the primary audiences for both National Occupational Standards and Essential Skills Profiles is employers, who use them for recruitment, training and succession planning. Trainers can also use these tools to identify skill requirements when developing course content. Moreover, both trainers and certification bodies use the information in the development of assessment tools. Whether these tools are used to train workers before they are hired or once they have the job, the benefits of using NOS and ESP are clear: employers have access to better-trained workers who are prepared to meet on-the-job challenges.

A Case In Point

A sector council, whose workforce has many second language speakers, wants to increase the number of workers with adequate language skills moving from entry level to supervisory positions. The sector council decides to develop occupation-specific workplace training modules that can be used in workplace training offered by a variety of companies.

The process starts with an analysis of the National Occupational Standard and Essential Skills Profile for each occupation under review. The competencies and examples from both documents are analyzed to understand the language demands for second language speakers. A needs analysis is carried out at various workplaces to understand workers' current skill sets and the demands of new positions. Trainers are then hired to develop assessments and to design language courses that address skill gaps. The training that results is customized to meet current skill requirements and to develop skills that are important when moving to supervisory positions. With stronger language skills, workers are also able to do their current jobs more safely and effectively.

The following describes some of the ways NOS and ES research is being applied.

Do you develop courses for internationally trained workers?

What is the goal?	Courses that build on immigrants' international training and experience, and prepare them to work in Canada.
How are NOS used?	Competencies listed in National Occupational Standards are identified and broken down into their component skills, knowledge and attitudes.
How are ESP used?	Illustrative examples from Essential Skills Profiles show how workers in the profession typically use essential skills on the job.
How is the information applied?	The combined information can be used to identify training requirements, develop training content and create assessment instruments.
What is the benefit?	Trainees will be better equipped for entry and success in the Canadian workforce.

Do you develop upgrading programs to help workers manage communication demands at work?

What is the goal?	Language upgrading to increase workers' confidence and abilities on the job.
How are NOS used?	Trainers interpret competency statements in the National Occupational Standards to learn what workers need to do on the job.
How are ESP used?	ESP examples help trainers identify appropriate instructional content such as reading materials and documents that can be used in learning activities.
How is the information applied?	Information from both sources is synthesized to target the language competencies that merit being taught and to identify meaningful workplace content.
What is the benefit?	Upgrading content can be made occupation- and workplace-specific.

Do you assess language skills of potential workers to see whether their skills are consistent with the needs of the occupation or profession?

What is the goal?	Assessment tools to identify potential workers' abilities to meet on-the-job skill demands.
How are NOS used?	Assessment developers interpret competency statements to identify critical competencies that merit being assessed.
How are ESP used?	Assessment developers use the examples and levels associated with the ESP to develop realistic assessment tasks.
How is the information applied?	Developers analyze occupational language demands and examine NOS and ESP to prioritize assessment content.
What is the benefit?	Assessment content mirrors job demands at the appropriate level of difficulty. Assessment results give a realistic picture of what workers can do on the job.

The three applications describe occupationally specific initiatives. Although these products are used individually in many other ways, their combined strength is that they provide complementary information about work demands and skill requirements. The applications also highlight a key audience for the products: internationally trained workers and workers with English as a Second Language (ESL).

Those who work with second language speakers have a special interest in understanding language requirements. They need information about how language is used on the job so they can, in turn, build training and assessment products that address the needs of both the worker and the workplace. Research in ESL suggests that developing and delivering content driven second language programs not only leads to better results in the course itself, but participants also perform better in subsequent language and content courses.[8] While the NOS and ESP refer to language skills such as reading, writing, document use and oral communication, neither approach focuses on documenting language skills. The absence of data related to language skills increases the challenge of developing training resources without further investigation specifically into language demands. This is especially true when trying to apply these products in high stakes assessment situations where assessors must be confident about the language levels demanded by the occupation.

[8] Song, Ballin (2006) "Content-based ESL Instruction: Long-term Effects and Outcomes". *English for Specific Purposes*. Volume 25, Issue 4, Page 420-437

Canadian Language Benchmarks and Job Analysis

While both the NOS and ES frameworks capture tasks which demand language skills, neither research process focuses explicitly on the language demands of those tasks.[9] As such, characteristics of tasks which would help language professionals identify appropriate programming and assessment may not be included. Without fully elaborated tasks, examples may not be sufficiently robust to support the detailed analysis that is necessary when using NOS and ESP for course design or other applications that target speakers with English as a Second Language.

In Canada, English as a Second Language professionals turn to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) to support planning, instruction and assessment. A task-based descriptive scale, the CLB describes what speakers of English as a Second Language can do with communication tasks.

Organized into 12 levels and grouped in three stages, the CLB addresses four skill areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The framework provides a description of language proficiency, where the tasks are more complex at higher benchmark levels.

Stage	Benchmarks	What the person can do	
Stage I	CLB 1-4	Communicate in common, familiar situations of immediate personal relevance	Basic
Stage II	CLB 5-8	Function independently in most familiar social, educational and work-related situations	Intermediate
Stage III	CLB 9-12	Communicate effectively, appropriately, accurately and fluently in most situations	Advanced

The CLB is used nationally, and provides a common framework for language learners, ESL instructors, program administrators, employers, and test and curriculum developers. The framework is also a useful point of reference for job analysts developing tools that will ultimately be used with ESL learners.

The indicators of complexity are the most significant aspect of the benchmark scale for job analysts; these are the features of texts and tasks that increase the language demand for speakers of English as a Second Language.

[9] Occupational Language Analyses (OLA) analyze NOS and ESP task examples to illustrate language demands of occupations. To learn more about OLA, refer to the Additional Information section at the back of the guide.

Enhancing Task Examples

Understanding the indicators of complexity for language skills will allow job analysts to take these into account as tasks are constructed for NOS and ESP. Although there are some commonalities, indicators of complexity are specific to each of the four skill areas. The following pages describe language complexity as outlined in the Canadian Language Benchmarks and provide tools to help job analysts use this information.

Language skill	Indicators of complexity	Used to enhance	Tools available
Reading	What makes reading complex? (p. 14)	Reading task examples Document use task examples	Reading checklist (p. 15) Document Use checklist (p. 18)
Writing	What makes writing complex? (p. 16)	Writing task examples Document use task examples	Writing checklist (p. 17) Document Use checklist (p. 18)
Speaking	What makes speaking complex? (p. 20)	Oral communication task examples	Oral Communication checklist (p. 21)
Listening	What makes listening complex? (p. 19)	Oral communication task examples	Oral Communication checklist (p. 21)

For Essential Skills analysts, examining different aspects of tasks to determine task complexity is not a new concept. For example, to assign Essential Skills complexity levels to reading tasks, ES analysts consider the length of the text, the amount of information that must be obtained from the text and the degree to which inference is required. According to both the ES Complexity Rating scales and the CLB, reading tasks that require evaluation, integration and synthesis are considered more difficult.

National Occupational Standards provide an inventory of the skills and knowledge required to perform a job within an occupation. Although tasks and subtasks are not grouped by skill, reading, writing and oral communication tasks are nonetheless included in many of the task statements, and may be further explained in the Skills Required section.

The checklists on pages 15, 17, 18 and 21 can help job analysts clearly specify language complexity. As a result, task descriptions will have the details language professionals need and NOS and ESP can be better employed to develop all Canadians' skills.

What makes reading complex?

The table below features CLB elements that drive complexity in reading; these include text length, context, visual supports and vocabulary. Review the table to learn how these elements contribute to reading task complexity, and to view examples that illustrate reading tasks at various points along the complexity scale.

	CLB 1-4	CLB 5-8	CLB 9-12
Text characteristics			
Length of text	Shorter texts (up to three paragraphs)	→	Longer texts (three to 30+ pages)
Familiarity with context and vocabulary	Familiar (common, everyday) contexts, concrete topics	→	Unfamiliar contexts, more abstract topics
Whether pictures support the text	Pictures, simple graphics, or other clear visual support may be present	→	Pictures, graphics and other visual support may be complex or not present
Vocabulary used	Familiar, factual, high frequency vocabulary used to convey mostly literal meanings	→	Unfamiliar, idiomatic and technical language used to describe abstract and conceptual ideas
Examples of what the reader can do with the text			
	Identify factual details **Get** the gist, key information **Follow** brief instructions. **Example:** Read short notices, ads	**Identify** specific factual details and inferred meanings **Identify** purpose **Example:** Read authentic notes, e-mail messages and letters →	**Identify, infer and interpret** point of view, personal attitudes and emotions, values, assumptions, intentions and motivations **Integrate and summarize** explicit and implied information and instructions **Evaluate** and read critically **Example:** Read editorials, personal essays, fictional writing

Reading Checklist

The following checklist can help job analysts describe reading tasks with increased level of detail. Some elements may already be included or implied in task descriptions; however, where they are not, including references to these elements will make tasks clearer.

Have I included these elements in my description?
☐ **Type of text** Identify reading material such as: e-mail from co-workers, legal contract, technical report, journal article.
☐ **Reading skill(s) employed** Specify skills, such as: skimming, scanning, detailed reading.
☐ **Purpose of reading** Define reason for reading, for example, to: locate, evaluate, synthesize, learn, interpret, apply.
☐ **Length of the text**
☐ **Workers' familiarity with the topic and vocabulary** Describe topic and vocabulary features such as: workplace jargon, unfamiliar topics, technical vocabulary, abstract topics.
☐ **Whether and how visuals support the text**

What makes writing complex?

The table below features CLB elements that affect complexity in writing; these include text length, context and topics, writing style and audience. Review the table to learn how these elements contribute to writing task complexity, and to view examples that illustrate writing tasks at various points along the complexity scale.

	CLB 1-4	CLB 5-8	CLB 9-12
Text characteristics			
Length of text	Shorter texts (up to one paragraph)	→	Longer texts (five to 20+ pages)
Formality of the context and writing style	Mostly informal context and writing style	→	Informal to very formal contexts and writing styles
Ability to deal with a range of topics and vocabulary	Personally relevant and concrete topics; simple, common, everyday words	→	Abstract, technical and sophisticated topics and vocubulary
Audience	Familiar audience	→	Less familiar or unfamiliar audiences
Examples of what the writer can do			
	Communicate simple information **Use** simple words to convey simple ideas about personal experience **Example:** Write a short note of invitation	**Convey** business messages as written notes **Convey** a personal message in a formal short letter or note, or through e-mail **Example:** Document an incident in paragraph form	**Convey** main ideas and support them with details **Present** complex propositions, assumptions and substantiation using patterns and structures such as definition, classification, exemplification, cause and effect to produce coherent text **Example:** Write a report to evaluate and compare; reduce and synthesize information from multiple sources

Writing Checklist

The following checklist can help job analysts ensure their writing task has an increased level of detail. Some elements may already be included or implied in task descriptions; however, where they are not, including reference to these elements will make tasks clearer.

Have I included these elements in my description?
☐ **Type of writing produced** Identify type of writing, such as: announcement, letter, report, article for publication.
☐ **Purpose of writing** Identify reason for writing, such as to: record, report, describe, evaluate, synthesize, hypothesize.
☐ **Use of text** State how the text will be used, for example, to: locate, evaluate, synthesize, learn, interpret, apply.
☐ **Length of the text**
☐ **Workers' familiarity with the topic and vocabulary** Describe topic and vocabulary features such as: workplace jargon, unfamiliar topics, technical vocabulary, abstract topics.
☐ **The text's intended audience**

Document Use Checklist

Document use may involve both reading and writing skills. Many of the same elements at play in reading and writing should also be considered when creating document use task examples. The following checklist can help job analysts include an increased level of detail related to language needs in document use tasks. Some elements may already be included or implied in task descriptions; however, where they are not, including reference to these elements will make tasks clearer.

Have I included these elements in my description?
☐ **Type of document** Identify type of document such as: list, graph, table, form.
☐ **Document use skill(s) employed** Specify skills, such as: skimming, scanning.
☐ **Purpose of document use** Define reason for using the document, for example, to: locate, enter, extract, evaluate, complete, synthesize.
☐ **Length of the document**
☐ **Workers' familiarity with the topic and vocabulary** Describe topic and vocabulary features such as: workplace jargon, unfamiliar topics, technical vocabulary, abstract topics.
☐ **Who will use the completed document**

What makes listening complex?

The table below features CLB elements that drive complexity in listening tasks; these include text length, context and topics, rate of speech, number of speakers and availability of visual supports. Review the table to learn how these elements contribute to listening task complexity, and to view examples that illustrate listening tasks at various points along the complexity scale.

	CLB 1-4	CLB 5-8	CLB 9-12
Text characteristics			
Length of text	Shorter	→	Longer (30+ minutes)
Familiarity with topics and vocabulary	Personally relevant and concrete contexts and topics; familiar, common everyday words	→	Abstract, technical and unfamiliar contexts and topics; full range of vocabulary including idiomatic expressions
Rate of speech and number of speakers	Slower rate of speech, fewer people speaking	→	Normal to faster rate of speech, more people speaking
Setting	Includes visual support: takes place mostly face to face or through video	→	Visual support may not be present: takes place face to face, through video or audio
Examples of what the listener can do with the text			
	Identify mostly explicit details **Get** the gist **Example:** Listen to a story about a personal experience	**Identify** details, facts, opinions, intent and mood **Identify and infer** both explicit and implicit meaning **Example:** Listen to conversations between individuals	**Infer** position, bias, assumptions and motives **Evaluate** appropriateness, usefulness, relevance, validity, credibility **Integrate and summarize** information **Example:** Listen to extended solutions, recommendations, proposals in the context of politics, social issues, workplace, and academic studies

What makes speaking complex?

The table below features CLB elements that drive complexity in speaking; these include text length, context and topics, rate of speech, setting and number of speakers. Review the table to learn how these elements contribute to speaking task complexity, and to view examples that illustrate speaking tasks at various points along the complexity scale.

	CLB 1-4	CLB 5-8	CLB 9-12
Text characteristics			
Length of text	Shorter (two to three words)	→	Longer (15 to 40+ minutes)
Formality of the context	Mostly informal contexts and speaking styles	→	Formal or semi-formal contexts and speaking styles
Familiarity with topics and vocabulary	Familiar topics; common, everyday vocabulary	→	Unfamiliar topics, abstract, theoretical, and technical vocabulary
Rate of speech	Slower to normal rate of speech	→	Normal to faster rate of speech
Setting and number of speakers	Takes place face to face; one person or familiar group	→	Takes place face to face or on the phone; includes large unfamiliar groups, authority figures
Examples of what the speaker can do			
	Greet, introduce self **Ask and answer** simple questions **Example:** Describe and/or talk about basic daily routines	**Describe** in some detail **Express** opinions, feelings, reservations **Suggest, propose, recommend** changes or solutions **Example:** Tell a detailed story or describe a process	**Negotiate**, clarify meaning **Advise or persuade**, e.g. to sell or recommend a product or service **Counsel, collaborate** in creating a complex project **Example:** Develop an argument, present an overview

Oral Communication Checklist

Most oral communication tasks involve both listening and speaking skills. From a language instruction perspective, understanding both the listening and speaking skills assists in selecting training content and approaches. The following checklist can help job analysts include an increased level of detail related to language needs in oral communication tasks. Some elements may already be included or implied in task descriptions; however, where they are not, including reference to these elements will make tasks clearer.

Have I included these elements in my description?
☐ **Setting** Describe context such as: in-person meeting, presentation, telephone conversation.
☐ **Purpose of the exchange** Identify reasons for the exchange, such as: listening to a presentation to learn, exchanging details about work, negotiating a sale, discussing a new concept.
☐ **Speaking and listening demands of the exchange**
☐ **Duration of the exchange or presentation**
☐ **Workers' familiarity with the topic and vocabulary** Describe topic and vocabulary features such as: workplace jargon, unfamiliar topics, technical vocabulary, theoretical topics.
☐ **Audience** Specify who the audience or participants are, such as: co-workers, supervisors, managers, clients.
☐ **Number of individuals involved**

Conclusion

The strong research methodologies used in identifying and recording key competencies, skills, and complexity levels of occupations make the NOS and ESP excellent resources for training and development activities. Yet as employers increasingly want and need to include second language speakers in their workforce, more must be done to understand and document this group's unique needs.

A thorough approach for capturing and describing workers' occupational skills must include indicators that arise from language task complexity. The Canadian Language Benchmarks standard describes what ESL speakers can do at various stages of language development. In some cases, the elements that drive complexity are the same as those already described for English first-language workers; but in others, the second language aspect introduces new ways of viewing this complexity.

With minor adjustments to current practice, NOS and ESP can be enhanced to furnish even stronger foundational information about occupational language demands. National Occupational Standards developers can be explicit about how the tasks they outline and the skills they describe are carried out. Essential Skills Profiles developers can include the details that illustrate language task complexity in their reading, writing, document use and oral communications task examples.

This guide is designed to support analysts as they consider ways of enhancing detail in their products. By using its summary tables and checklists, they will be able to develop National Occupational Standards and Essential Skills Profiles that give readers a clearer picture of language demands at work.

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks is the centre of expertise in support of the national standards in English and French for describing, measuring and recognizing second language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants for living and working in Canada.