



The **SCALES** Card Sort Tool

The CONNECT SCALES Project:
Supporting the Canadian Advancement of
Literacy and Essential Skills

How to use the Essential Skills Card Sort

The Card Sort Tool is a “hands-on” way to discover, confirm and sort Essential Skills that have been developed in [Work, Learning and Life experiences](#). In this package, you will find 2 types of Card Sorts. One grouping of cards, “Life Tasks”, list skills that might be developed and recognized in one’s “non-work” life. The other set are skills related to the “Work Tasks”. These cards are not exclusive to all tasks at home or at work; they represent a variety of activities in each area.

These cards focus on the Essential Skills as defined by Human Resources Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The nine Essential Skills are: Reading, Document Use, Writing, Numeracy, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Thinking, Computer Use and Continuous Learning. For more information on Essential Skills, visit: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/index.shtml>

These cards can be used in a one-on-one scenario with a participant and practitioner, or in career or employment workshops. The cards may be used for all areas of career development:

Who Am I?

The cards can be used to explore one’s likes and abilities related to Essential Skills.

What Do I Want To Do or Be?

The cards can be used to explore occupational requirements and look at skill matches for job requirements.

How Do I Reach My Goals?

The cards can be used to identify learning goals, required skills for school and work success.

Getting Started: Action Planning

The cards can be used to identify skills to prepare resumes, cover letters, portfolios and for interview preparation.



Determine which set of cards would be most useful for yourself or the participant that will be working with these cards

Ask yourself, would the “Life Tasks” or “Work Tasks” cards be most suitable? Or do you want the participant to explore both and see the relationship between work and life?

Hints:

- Make sure there are enough cards for each participant
- If the participant has never entered the workforce, has been out of the workforce for a while or if work has not been a positive place, the “Life Tasks” cards might be more suitable.
- If the participant has been in the workplace and is more confident about identifying workplace skills, then the “Work Tasks” cards may be the best choice.
- If the practitioner would like the participant to understand the relationship between life and work, then both sets of cards may be used.



Decide which Header Cards would be most purposeful

Here are the different Header Cards:

Exercise One: Who Am I?

I can do this

I cannot do this

I can do this with help

Exercise Two: Who Am I?

I like to do this

I do not like to do this

I have never tried this

Exercise Three: What Do I Want To Do/Be?

My job requires this

My job does not requires this

My job may requires this

If the card user is looking to discover general skills, you may want to use the “I CAN DO” cards or the “I LIKE TO DO” cards.

If the card user is looking to discover transferable skills or identify skills for a job search, you may want to use “MY JOB REQUIRES” cards.

If the card user is looking to discover Essential Skills required for their work goal you may want to use the “MY JOB REQUIRES” cards.

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Arrange the cards

Ask the participant to arrange the Header Cards beside each other on a flat surface with lots of space. Then provide the skill cards and ask the user to place the cards below each Header Card, e.g.

I like to do this	I do not like to do this	I have never tried this
I read short emails to find a meeting time 	I review checklists to ensure work is done 	I analyze pension contributions and project the rate of returns 
I work as a member of a team 	I set up computer networks and passwords for all the users 	

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Look for patterns, skills, interests, and areas of improvement

Hint: Remember, the cards may need some flexibility. E.g. If a participant has worked with home finances and not formal budgeting, the budgeting card could still apply.

As the cards are sorted into categories, both the participant and the career practitioner will be able to determine patterns, skills, interests and areas of improvement.

See the Card Sort Coding Sheet later in this document. The border colour of each of the cards corresponds to this chart as does the style of the “gear” that is pictured on the card. If the career practitioner becomes familiar with the colour and gear scheme, it will be easy to determine a participant’s comfort level with all the skills and their level of functioning (easy/medium/hard tasks) in that skill.

As mentioned earlier, the “I CAN DO”, “I LIKE TO DO”, “MY JOB REQUIRES” cards may be used to determine occupational goals, skills to add to a resume, or skills that might be discussed in an interview.

The skill cards that are placed under “I CANNOT DO”, “I DON’T LIKE TO DO”, “MY JOB REQUIRES”, may be areas for the career practitioner and the participant to consider as possible areas to focus on for upskilling, creating a personalized learning plan, or making educational choices linked to career development.

Once the exercise has been completed, the participant may enter the information on the Card Sort Participant Worksheet for future reference. Also, this information may be entered on the Road Map.

TIP: As you get comfortable using the Card Sort Tool, you may wish to use it to build participant’s confidence. The information gleaned from the Card Sort Tool may also become part of the participant’s occupational decision making in conjunction with other information from the Road Map Tool.



Occupation research

Using “My Job Requires” cards may call for the participant to assess information about the occupation using websites such as:

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/profiles/profiles.shtml> or search for other occupational information using tools such as Career Cruising or Working in Canada. This is especially relevant in career exploration, job search or decision making.



Measuring skill levels

Essential Skills are measured on either a 1-4 or 1-5 scale. For the purpose of these cards, instead of a 1-5 numbering system, the tasks are rated Easy, Medium and Hard. The tasks match up in this way:

Easy : Roughly Level One tasks



Medium : Roughly Level Two and Level Three tasks



Hard : Roughly Level Four and Level Five tasks



Each of the cards have been given a code that represents a specific Essential Skill and the skill level of that task. Using the attached legend, the practitioner will be able to determine if the card user has skills at a variety of levels or if they are most comfortable at a certain level. This information may also be useful to compare to the Essential Skills Profiles listed above and to determine if upskilling is necessary.



Debriefing the tool

This tool may be used to determine a participant's comfort level with Essential Skills with the "I CAN DO THIS" card. Or it can be used to discover interests with the "I LIKE TO DO" cards while the "MY JOB REQUIRES" cards allows the career practitioner and participant to explore the participant's understanding of their chosen occupation.

The career practitioner may need to ask questions of the participant to assist in further career exploration and decision-making.

These questions include:

- Why do you like or not like this skill?
- Would it be different if you were able to practice or had someone work with you?
- If there is a skill you do not like or cannot do, will you steer away completely from any occupation that requires this skill?
- Will you record all the skills? Or only the ones that need to be worked on? Or only the ones you identify as strong?

Hint: See the [Card Sort Participant Worksheet](#) that participants use to record the Essential Skills

Card Sort Coding - Basic

	Easy	Medium	Hard
Reading			
Document Use			
Numeracy			
Writing			
Computer Use			
Oral Communication			
Working With Others			
Thinking			
Continuous Learning			

Card Sort Participant Worksheet

Instructions:

After receiving the instructions from your career practitioner, complete a card sort exercise, and record your skills for future reference. In the three boxes below, enter the Header Card titles; for example, “I Can Do This”, “I Cannot Do This”, and “I Can Do This With Help”. Then list the Essential Skills and where you placed them during your sorting.

This tool may be used to determine your level of comfort with the “I CAN DO THIS” cards. Or it can be used to discover interests with the “I LIKE TO DO” cards while the “MY JOB REQUIRES” cards will allow you to explore your understanding of the Essential Skills within a chosen occupation. Some of the questions below may help you in further career exploration and decision-making.

These questions include:

- Why do you like or not like this skill?
- Would it be different if you were able to practice or had someone work with you?
- If there is a skill you do not like or cannot do, will you steer away completely from any occupation that requires this skill?



