

TEAM PROBLEM SOLVING

for

COOK TRAINEES

A Skills for Success Curriculum Guide

**Prepared by Moira Gutteridge Kloster and Wendy Watson,
University College of the Fraser Valley**

TEAM PROBLEM SOLVING

for

COOK TRAINEES

A Skills for Success Curriculum Guide

A cost-shared project of the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and
the [National Literacy Secretariat](#),
Human Resources Development Canada

A joint project of the University College of the Fraser Valley and the Salvation Army Cook
Training Program

**Prepared by Moira Gutteridge Kloster and Wendy Watson,
with assistance from Mike Macaborski, Toni Cartmell and Deborah Portinger (Salvation
Army, Abbotsford)
Sue Brigden and Sherry Edmunds-Flett (UCFV)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to the program for instructors

The reasons for this program

What this program offers

Module One - Overview

Module Two - Overview

1. Instructors' Guide for Module One: Core Problem Solving

Skills

Using Module One

How to Help the Students

Giving Feedback

Exercises:

Observation

Focussing

Seeing Possibilities

Observation and Possibilities Combined

2. Instructors' Guide for Module 2: Expanded Problem Solving

Skills

Using Module 2

Module Overview

Part 1: Activities to Develop Problem-Solving Skills & Attitudes

Goals for this Part

Student Handout: Self-Test #1

Student Handout: Helpful Questions

Exercises

Part 2: Small Group Exercises to Build Teamwork Skills

Goals for this Part

Student Handout: Self-Test #2

Student Handout: Helpful Questions

Student Handout: Worksheet

Exercises

Part 3: Team Problem-Solving Exercises in Job-Related Situations

[Goals for this Part](#)

[Student Handout: Self-Test #3](#)

[Student Handout: Helpful Questions](#)

[Exercises](#)

Answer Guide for Self-Tests

[Self-Test #1](#)

[Self-Test #2](#)

[Self-Test #3](#)

Appendices

A. The Learning Theory

[Problem Solving Principles](#)

[Problem Solving Model](#)

B. How this Program Meets Employers' and Learners' Needs

[Employers' Needs](#)

[Learners' Needs](#)

C. The Instructor's Role in Helping Students Be Successful Learners

[Teaching Techniques](#)

[Giving Students Feedback](#)

[Instructor Marking Guidelines](#)

[Guiding Questions for Team Problem Solving](#)

Annotated Resources

Bibliography

Introduction for the Instructor

The reasons for this program

What do we need to succeed at our jobs? Your students are about to learn something you know only too well success means more than just having the right skills, and showing up on time. We have all felt the tensions of meeting a new set of expectations. Can we figure out what our employer wants? Can we do it without looking stupid, or being embarrassed, or feeling uncomfortable? Can we cope with the unexpected challenges as well as the routine tasks?

Meeting our employer's needs while still being true to ourselves is an essential part of being able to keep and enjoy our jobs. But it's not an easy task. All of us have had trouble at one time or another trying to figure out the expectations of a new workplace. Is it a "show some initiative" place, or a "by-the-book and don't ask questions" place? Is it a place where everyone pitches in to help, or is it a place where you'd better stick to your own job if you don't want to find you're trespassing on someone else's turf? And how do you figure out what you must do – when it may not be ok to ask directly? Every time a new situation comes up at work, you have a new chance to mess up - or a new chance to succeed. You must be ready to deal with what is new to you.

In a kitchen, you don't succeed or fail on your own. You are part of a team, and you must know how to play your part in the team properly. You have to have a sense of how your piece of the job fits into the whole. You have to be ready on time with your part of the preparation. You have to pitch in to help others if needed. You have to follow the executive chef's instructions, but be able to deal with what comes up without constantly asking for more instructions. In short, you have to manage that very difficult balance between being able to get on with things by yourself and being able to do what other people need when they need it.

Some of us take to this enthusiastically; some of us have to learn it. Teamwork doesn't come naturally to everyone, but it can be taught. And we all need to learn it or we won't last long in a busy kitchen.

This program aims to help your students build the confidence and the skills it takes to succeed in problem solving and teamwork in the kitchen.

What this Program Offers

In this guide, you will find two step-by-step exercises you can give your students to help them develop their skills and confidence:

You can do one set by itself, or you can do both. Module One is recommended for cook instructors who can only add a few exercises to their course, or for programs where students arrive in the cooking class before they have had any life skills training. Module Two is a complete program by itself. It depends on students having a basic life skills course first. This module takes students further than Module One can do. All its exercises can be given by life-

skills instructors or cook instructors in a classroom setting, as long as there is occasional access to the kitchen during the program.

Module One: Core Problem Solving Skills

For cook instructors with limited time.

This module covers only some very basic problem solving skills: just enough to get students developing a problem-solving attitude.

It has two objectives:

- to make sure that students can cope with the demands of your training program by learning to work more independently for longer periods of time
- to make sure that when students leave the program they will be able to work under an executive chef in their new workplace who may not run the kitchen exactly the way you do.

This set of exercises gives you short exercises you can fit into your cooking instruction to help your students develop their ability to manage an increasing number of steps and aspects of food preparation over an increasing period of time:

- individual and group activities to build observation and information-gathering skills
- group activities to build planning and decision-making skills

Module Two: Expanded Problem Solving Skills

For cook instructors or life skills coaches who can provide classroom or kitchen time to build problem-solving skills.

This module covers a full range of problem-solving skills, starting with the same basic skills as Module One and then moving into problem-solving that requires teamwork. Module Two builds up to dealing with difficulties and inconveniences, preparing students to handle challenges and frustrations on the job.

It has three objectives:

- to make sure that students can cope with the demands of your training program by learning to work more independently for longer periods of time you want them to check that they are doing things right, but you want them to check less often and be able to do more on their own
- to make sure students know how to work well with others, you want them to be able to plan effectively and work with each other. You want them to be able to handle routine situations on their own without forgetting anything, and you want them thinking ahead so that they can anticipate what will need doing and get ready ahead of time.

- to make sure that students can deal with challenges and difficulties in the workplace. You want them to be able to handle changes and problems without becoming stressed or flustered, so they can become valued employees.

This set of exercises gives you short activities that gradually get more difficult.

- Individual activities to develop each student's problem-solving attitude and skills
- Small group exercises to help students become team players
- Team problem-solving exercises to apply the skills to situations they might face on the job.

Using both modules:

If you have the time and the opportunity to use both modules, you can easily do so. Once you have finished Module One, you have done most of the first part of Module Two. You can start into Module Two, leaving out the exercises you have already covered and going straight to the new exercises.

What's in the program: an overview of the basic components

The program provides a series of problem-solving exercises based on situations that might arise in a kitchen. For each type of exercise, several sample situations are listed and one example is worked out in detail to illustrate what you might expect as you work with students. You can use these examples to help you create your own exercises to suit your own students, your kitchen, and your experience.

Module 1

Core Problem Solving Skills

Part 1: *Observe* and gather information
 Focus on what is important
 See possibilities for action

Part 2: Use the skills from Part 1 to solve problems involving planning and teamwork

Module 2

Expanded Problem Solving Skills

Part 1: Individual activities to develop problem-solving skills and attitudes using four basic skills:

Observe and gather information
Focus on what is important

See possibilities for action
Value everyone's contribution

Part 2: Small group activities to build teamwork skills

Recognize what must be done
Set priorities and understand how each person's tasks fit into the whole
Divide tasks so each person contributes
Co-ordinate tasks to meet a deadline
Monitor progress and adjust plans if needed

Part 3: Team problem-solving exercises in job-related situations

Carry out a task independently, without detailed instructions

Deal with inconveniences or problems effectively
Juggle competing priorities
Break a complex problem down into smaller pieces to do one by one

INSTRUCTORS' GUIDE

MODULE ONE: Core Problem Solving Skills

(for cook instructors)

Goals, Exercises, Questions, and Guidelines for Feedback

Using Module One

These exercises will help you to help your students survive the problem-solving demands of the training program itself. They will also help students learn the basics for developing the problem-solving skills needed on the job.

For additional team-building and problem solving skills, see the Expanded Problem Solving Skills module, which can be added to the existing life-skills coaching. It would be best to do the life skills coaching component first, but you can do these core activities even when the cooking training has to come first.

Your main objective: to help your students develop their ability to manage an increasing number of steps and aspects of food preparation over an increasing period of time.

Goals:

- To start with, you want them to be able to handle a single task for a short period of time, and check with you that they are doing it right.
- Midway through the program, you want them to be able to organize their time for at least half a day, and check with you only when they really need to.
- By the end of the program, you want them to be able to think ahead to plan their day, and the rest of the week ahead. You want them to be confident that they know what to do and how to do it, so they only need to check with you when something unexpected comes up.

As they leave the program, you want them to be ready to be able to work under an executive chef in their new workplace who may not run the kitchen exactly the way you do.

How To Help The Students

1. Your role:

You are the students' coach and partner.

- You build their confidence by making sure they will be able to do what you ask of them. You do this by controlling the size of the task you give them, starting small and working up to more difficult tasks. This set of exercises will suggest the kind of activities you can try with your students. You can adapt and develop the exercises so that they suit you and your students.
- You tell them what they've done right at each step, so their confidence grows, and then you give them the next step that they need to work on, so their ability grows. You'll find suggestions for good feedback at the end of each exercise.

2. The skills you can help students build

There are four thinking skills a person needs to become a better problem solver. These skills are:

Observe and gather information

Focus on what is important

See possibilities for action

Value everyone's contribution

These skills are described in more detail below and in the Expanded Problem Solving section (see [Module Two](#)).

Module One builds the first three skills.

observing

focussing

seeing possibilities.

The observation skill comes first, because it helps students slow down and notice what is really there to see, without getting caught up in worrying whether they're "getting it right".

You can help by giving them exercises in watching more closely, finding more ways to get information, and learning more ways to help remember information. This core module contains a wide range of observation exercises you can use at different stages in your program.

B. Focussing

The most important focus of the job is the customer you serve.

This skill comes next, because you want students always to keep the customer in mind. Whatever they do must be done with an eye to how it helps to get the meal to the customer on time and looking and tasting good.

You can help students by showing them how you always think of the customer in your planning and your preparation, and by giving them exercises that help them see the connection between what they are doing and what the customer wants.

C. Seeing possibilities

Being able to see more than one possible way to speak or act is vital in helping students become more confident in their ability to do things on their own.

Students have to be able to see that there are some things it is safe to try on their own, or else they will be checking with you far more often than you want. They will be too afraid of what will happen if they get something wrong. At the same time, you don't want them to forget to check what they should check so that they can get it right. You want them to learn to strike a balance between independence and following orders.

- You can help by showing them when there is more than one acceptable way to do a task, and by giving them real choices that they must make for themselves.

What choices they can realistically make for themselves may vary from kitchen to kitchen and program to program. This core module suggests some exercises, as well as ways you can create exercises that will work for you.

3. Choosing exercises that work for your program:

- *Adapt to suit your curriculum.*

For every problem-solving skill, we've suggested at least one exercise that will practice the skill. These examples are just illustrations. You are free to vary the exercises so that they suit your kitchen and your working style.

- *Build in repetition*

Just as you do with the cooking instruction itself, you will need to build in repetition because it is so hard for anyone to get something new right the first time. Most of the exercises lend themselves easily to repetition: you can do the same activity with different ingredients, or the same activity with the same ingredients next time they're on the menu.

- *Build in structure*

You'll also need to build in structure. That means that you need to make sure that as the exercises get more difficult, they are still built out of pieces the students have seen before. For example, they may use the same ingredients, the same preparation steps, and the same menus. If you do

this, the students can see that there are pieces they already know how to handle, and they will feel more confident and willing to try the more difficult task.

We suggest that you plan your exercises by working backwards. Choose a menu you know students should be able to cook at the end of the course. From that menu, pick one dish they will be learning to prepare part way through the course, and one ingredient they will be learning to prepare very early in the course.

The practice exercises will then build from easy to hard, but just like your menus, the hard exercises will be mostly built out of pieces the students have already learned how to do:

- *How the exercises are organized in Module One:*
 - *observation* exercises about one ingredient,
 - *focussing* exercise to remind students of the importance of the customer
 - exercises in *seeing possibilities* for creating one dish,

exercises that *combine skills* so students can gather information and make their own choices about menus and preparation.

Giving Feedback

General advice:

- Whatever the exercise, start by telling the student what he or she has got right and then suggest what to work on next.

Did she cut the carrot into the right size slices? Great; next time see if you can get the same size slices and do it a little faster.

Did the group's preparation list just say, "Chicken, carrots, potatoes, peaches, ice cream?" Great, they've got the main ingredients; now go on to get the main equipment.

- The basic pattern of feedback will always be "Yes, ..., AND ...".

They will hear and remember this. People do not hear negative feedback very well, especially under stress. If you say, "Don't ..." or "Not this way ...", people tend to grasp only that they did something bad, which doesn't make them want to try again. Worse still, if they do remember what you said, they tend to leave out the "not" or the "don't" and simply remember exactly the bit you didn't want them to do again. "Don't cut them that size" tends to come back in memory as "cut them that size".

Whenever you can, show the students how you think let them see you working through what you will do.

Note: For further information on giving feedback, see [Appendix C "The Instructor's Role in Helping Students be Successful Learners."](#)

Exercises

A. Observation

Notebook Strategy: If you don't already do so, you could encourage students to carry a notebook with them to write down everything you ask them to observe, This is a good way to make sure that they notice what they are noticing, instead of simply watching and hoping they'll remember. The notebook is also a valuable resource for them to look back at for information they gathered earlier.

1. Noticing the details of rough prep techniques

Activity: Pick an item you're going to do rough prep on - for example - carrots. Ask students to make a note of **two** things they see you doing when you peel a carrot. Then, without asking them what they noticed, ask them to watch you again, and make a note of **two** more things they see you doing.

Feedback: Ask each student in turn what four things he/she noticed. If anyone has less than four items, say they might remember a few more as they hear others speak.

If anyone has the same as someone else, ask the person to say all four items anyway. Tell the students that it helps us all to know that other people saw the same things we did we can be more confident we saw it right.

If anyone says something you do not think actually happened, wait until after you have gone round the whole group. If it is only one thing, or only from one person, let it go this time. If two people say things you don't think are right, say, "A couple of things were mentioned that aren't quite the way I remember it. Watch me again, and this time let's all look for that." If everyone agrees this time, that's fine. If there's still disagreement on what exactly you did, use your own judgement tell them if it's important to get it right, and go over the details again. If it's not important, tell them that it's a matter of choice.

2. Noticing details required for quality

Purpose: Same as above

Activity: Set out a pile of prepared vegetables ! for example, cut carrots. Ask each student to cut 2 carrots and bring them over to you. Set each student's work out separately, and ask students to decide whose pile of carrots looks closest to your cut sample.

Feedback: If they all agree on one sample, take them one step further. Pick two other samples at random. For each sample ask the whole group, "Suggest one thing that would make these more like my sample." (Stop at one suggestion because otherwise the feedback will be too intimidating for the person whose sample it is). Your main aim is to get the students noticing differences, not to improve their cutting technique in one go. All the person needs right away is one aspect to work harder at next time.

If they disagree as to which sample looks closest, pick out the ones they have chosen as good and take them one step further. Ask everyone to compare the student samples with each other for one feature - for example, it might be the size of each piece, or it might be how even the pieces are in size.

3. Estimating prep time

Purpose: To encourage students to get information by estimating

Many students are very reluctant to do this. Estimating is a different skill than counting or measuring exactly. Some students don't know how to estimate, and some don't believe that an estimate is as useful as the measured answer.

Activity: Give each student the same number of carrots, and explain how you want them cut. Before they start, ask, "How long do you think it will take you to cut 10 carrots?" (to desired specifications) Write down each person's estimate. Now get the students to try it. Time them, either by noting yourself when each person finishes, or by pairing up the students so they take turns timing each other.

Feedback: Go round the group and ask, "How close did you come to your estimate?" Congratulate the person who came closest to his/her estimate, however fast or slow the actual time was. Ask that person how he/she came up with the estimate.

Repeat the exercise at least once and preferably twice, each time asking students to estimate in advance. Each time, compare the estimates with the actual times. If more people get closer to their own estimates, congratulate them. Remind them that it is very helpful to know how long it takes each of them personally to finish a prep task recipes list cooking times for them, but they don't usually list prep times. Now they know how to figure out how long it will take from start to finish in getting cooked carrots ready.

4. Speeding up prep without sacrificing quality

Purpose: To help students keep track of two goals at once: speed and quality. (This exercise should only be done if students have already done the estimating exercise by itself.)

Activity: Give each student 10 carrots and explain how you want them cut. This time, ask, "How fast do you think you can do it and still keep them looking exactly the way I need them?"

Ask the group to try it. Time them, or have them time each other in pairs, and then bring their piles over to your sample.

Feedback: Ask everyone first to check how close their pile of carrots looks to your sample. Anyone whose pile does not look close enough should stop there: they may have been working a bit too fast.

For those whose piles look right, then ask, "How close did you come to your estimate?" Anyone who has managed to work faster than they usually do and has still produced a good result can be asked to share with the rest of the group what they did that helped them work a bit faster.

5. Working backwards from serving time to cooking start time for one dish

Purpose: to have students use two or more pieces of information to complete a task

Activity: Ask the students, "When will we need to start the carrots cooking so they are ready at noon?" You can have each student figure out his/her own answer, or you can get the group to agree on an answer whichever best suits your kitchen style.

Feedback: For each answer you get, ask how the person or group figured it out. Congratulate them on everything they remembered correctly or worked out correctly. If anyone has an answer or part of the answer that won't work, praise what they did do right even if it is just that they did their best to come up with an answer and then suggest what they might have forgotten or mixed up.

6. Using records to estimate the number of meals to serve

Purpose: to get students using observation and estimation as a way to build up accurate information.

Activity: Ask the group members to make note every day for a week of how many people they served. (This is probably best done by having a list posted somewhere the whole group can see, and having them share the responsibility for making sure the list is added to each day.) Now ask each person to make an estimate of how many people they guess will be served each day next week. Keep a list for the next week. At the end of the week, ask, "How close did you come?"

Feedback: Ask each person how he/she decided whether the numbers would be the same or different for next week. Ask everyone if they noticed anything which might

explain why the numbers weren't exactly the same as the previous week. Get the group to decide what they would estimate for the following week.

7. Estimating quantities

Purpose: To collect information and use it in a calculation.

Activity: Choose an item you'll be preparing later in the week, and ask students to estimate the quantity you'll need. For example, how many carrots will you need to feed 30 people? Give the students enough time to work out an answer.

Feedback: Ask, "How did you get your answer?" Congratulate students on any thinking they did that involved scaling up or down from amounts you have had them prepare before.

If they forgot to go by weight after cutting, suggest that the whole group checks the answer by trying it. Prepare and weigh the quantity of carrots they suggested. If the weight is less than needed, ask them to work out how much weight has been lost in cutting. Help them to figure out how to increase the quantity of carrots to allow for weight loss. (It is not vital to this exercise that they be able to do the calculation themselves.)

Ask each person in the group to think of one more food item that will lose weight after rough preparation your main purpose in this exercise is to reinforce their ability to realize what they must take into account.

8. Double checking orders

Purpose: to learn not to accept information without checking it, and to learn more about what's involved in planning ahead

Activity: Give one or two students next week's menu and your order list. Ask them to double check your order to see that there will have enough supplies to cover that menu.

Feedback: Ask, "How did you do your checking?" Use your own experience to praise anything they did sensibly and quickly, and to suggest anything they should have done that they forgot.

9. Making a complete equipment list

Purpose: to make sure students collect complete information.

Activity: Ask students as a group to make a list of all the equipment they will need to get a main dish ready for example, honey-glazed chicken.

Feedback: Congratulate the students on what they put on the list that will be needed.

If the list is not complete, walk the students through the preparation step by step so they can picture it in their minds. At each step, ask what equipment is needed, and get them to add it to their list if it is not already there knives? cutting boards? pots? serving dishes?

Post the finished list where they can see it.

10. Working backwards from serving time to cooking start time for a complete meal

Purpose: to work backwards from information about the future - planning effectively.

Activity: Give the group the day's main course, for example, honey-glazed chicken, potatoes, and carrots. Ask, "When will we need to start the carrots, the potatoes, and the chicken to be sure they are all ready at noon?"

Feedback: Watch the students as they start working on this. If they seem stuck, suggest they start by making a note of how long each dish takes to cook, and remind them of where they can find that information in their notes or text. Then let them work on the rest of the task alone.

Once they have a list of starting times, walk them through what they've suggested. Use your experience to point out what they've done right, and suggest where they might need to start something earlier or delay something.

B. Focussing

Focussing is simply about remembering that it is most important to get the food to the customer on time, looking and tasting appealing. Everything else takes second place to that.

Realizing how preparation techniques serve the customer

Purpose: To show students that every tip you give them, and every instruction, is to make sure that the customer will be well-served.

Activity: Take a preparation task that you know is not done the same way in a commercial kitchen as it would be in a home kitchen for example, peeling potatoes. Ask the students to watch how you do it, and be ready to tell you why they think you are doing it that way.

Feedback: Ask each person in turn what they think. Go round the whole group once without commenting on their answers. (Students need to feel safe when they speak up,

especially about reasons. The easiest way to make them feel safe is not to judge their answer as good or bad right away.) Then go round again ask each person to remind you what their answer is. This time, whatever their answer is, take them one step deeper into the reasons. For example, "It's quicker that way? Can you tell me why it's a good idea for me to be quicker?"

If the student goes straight to a suggestion like, "Then you can be sure you'll be ready on time", congratulate them say "That's right: the customer is most important, and this way I can get the meal to the customer on time."

If the student does not give an answer linked to the customer's needs, for example, "Then you can get on to something that's more fun to prepare," you can take them through the steps you'd use to show that whatever you do still connects to the customer. For example, you might say, "Well, some things are more fun than others, but if I work quickly it's more important to me to know that I'll have the meal ready on time so the customers aren't kept waiting."

Follow up by reminding the students during other cooking lessons how your preparation techniques are all designed to make sure the customer is satisfied. Occasionally, ask students if they can see how a particular technique or plan works for the customer.

C. Seeing Possibilities

"Seeing possibilities" is all about realizing there is more than one thing that is safe to try. Some people won't act by themselves because they are afraid they'll only do something that will get them into trouble. Other people rush ahead and go too far on their own because they haven't stopped to think whether what they are doing is safe.

The importance of having choices:

You want to encourage students to realize they can try things on their own, as long as what they try is safe.

Therefore, it is very important in all of the following exercises to make it clear to students that there is more than one possible answer to the questions. Students often find it hard to suggest choices because they are used to thinking you know best, and they are used to teachers asking questions to which the teacher already knows the best answer. You want to use these exercises to build the students' confidence that they can have good answers too. If they come up with suggestions you have not thought of, you should congratulate them on good thinking and tell them that's an idea you didn't think of.

Make sure the choices are real

If there is, in your opinion, only one really good answer then there is no point asking for options. For example, if a recipe must have diced carrots, there's no point asking how to cut the carrots. If there really is only one pot the right size to cook that quantity, there is no point asking which pot to use. These are not genuine choices. Instructors do still ask questions like "How do we cut the carrots?" or "Which pot do we use?" but when there is only one good answer, these questions test students' understanding, not their ability to recognize and make choices.

Make it very clear to students when you are asking a question just to test their understanding, and when you are asking a genuinely open question and you want to see several different answers come up.

1. Seeing several possibilities for preparing a dish

Purpose: to make sure students can see that there can be more than one safe option to try.

Activity: Ask students to come up with their own suggestions about a preparation or cooking task where there really is a choice. For example, "How could we cut carrots to serve as a vegetable on the side? (e.g. Slice? Dice? Batons?)" Or, "Which pot could we cook them in?"

Feedback: Ask each person to think of one suggestion. Go round the group and ask each person to say what they thought of

Ask each person to think of one suggestion. Go round the group and ask each person to say what they thought of

Congratulate the group for the total number of suggestions they came up with between them. Say that it's good to have choices, because then you can see what will fit in best with the rest of the meal.

Don't try to make a choice at this point the idea is to help students be comfortable seeing that they have choices, so you don't want to rush them back into thinking there must be one "best" answer right away.

Congratulate the group for the total number of suggestions they came up with between them. Say that it's good to have choices, because then you can see what will fit in best with the rest of the meal.

Don't try to make a choice at this point the idea is to help students be comfortable seeing that they have choices, so you don't want to rush them back into thinking there must be one "best" answer right away.

2. Choosing where to start or what to do

Purpose: To encourage students to make choices that fit with their own preferences, whenever this is realistic.

This helps students feel that they can make valuable contributions, without feeling they are just cogs in a machine.

Activity: Give each student two or three things to be done during the day, that are not time-critical. Ask, "Which part of the prep would you like to start with?" Or have two or three things that need to be done, and can be done by any number of students. Ask every student, "What would you like to do?"

Feedback: In this exercise, the most important thing is to resist any attempts by the students to ask you what you would like them to do, or what you think they ought to do. You want the choice to be entirely theirs. You also want to avoid situations where students might find themselves competing to do a task they can't both do - that involves resolving a conflict, which is not part of this exercise.

When the students make their choices, accept them, and ask the students to get on with what they've chosen.

As soon as they've had time to finish all the assigned tasks, call them together and ask how it went. Congratulate them on what they did get done. Ask them what they'd do the same way next time, and whether there's anything they might do differently.

Listen to the suggestions but don't criticize them limit your feedback to, "Well, that would be something to think about for next time."

3. Seeing the value of advance prep

Purpose: To plan ahead, looking at several options.

Activity: Give them the next two days' menus, for example: Day One might be Baked Salmon with Hollandaise, Steamed Potatoes, Broccoli with almonds, and Apple Crisp. Day Two might be Braised Pork Chop with onions and mushrooms, Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Buttered Carrots, and Lemon Tart. Make sure that both menus can be done either with or without some advance preparation. Ask, "What rough prep could we do right now for tomorrow and the next day?"

Feedback: Ask students what they have come up with. Use your experience to congratulate them on what would be worth doing, and set them to work on it. Do not add any suggestions of your own at this point your aim is to get the students anticipating what should be done, not guessing your right answer. At the end of the next day, after the meal is served, call them together and remind them what they did the day before. Ask, "How well did it work to get those things done ahead of time?" Comment on any suggestions as if you are one of the group use your experience not to tell them what to do, but to tell them what's worked for you before and why.

4. Choosing ways to improve the appearance of a dish

Purpose: To generate creative options.

Activity: Give them a dessert that is quite plain in appearance jello, pie, plainly frosted cake. Ask, "What could we add to the dessert to make it more attractive?"

Feedback: Make sure the group keeps going until you have at least four suitable suggestions for example, whipped topping, pieces of fruit on the side, sprinkles, decorative cuts on pie crust, etc. List the ideas.

Tell them any limitations that will apply - e.g. must use ingredients already on hand; must not take too much time to do.

Then ask students to choose one of the suggestions and try it.

D. Observation and Seeing Possibilities Combined

1. Seeing what's needed for a complete prep list

Purpose: to generate a complete preparation list

Activity: Give them a complete menu, for example, Honey-garlic Chicken, Scalloped Potatoes, Carrots, Peach Melba. Ask students to make up a preparation list with all the times, tasks, and equipment.

Feedback: Look at their list, congratulate them on what they've got right so far, and take them the next step by prompting them with a further question.

For example, in a first try, they may only list the main ingredients chicken, carrots, potatoes, peaches, icecream. You can say, "Good, that's the main ingredients. Now, what about equipment?"

Continue until you have a list you'd accept as complete.

2. Delegating duties

Purpose: Same as above, but with the added factor of making decisions about each other's duties.

Activity: Use the preparation list from the previous exercise, with all the times, equipment, and ingredients. Choose one person to act as executive chef. Make it very clear to the rest of the group that they will get a turn in this role in other exercises, if they

have not already had a turn. Ask the "executive chef" to complete the preparation list by including the delegation of tasks: who is going to do what?

Feedback: Review the student's plan with the group before they start the tasks. They may be reluctant at this point to accept another student as a leader. The student may be unsure how well the plan will work.

Check it over, approve of what is right, make suggestions as needed, and then let the students carry it out.

Ask the "executive chef" to stay responsible for seeing that everyone else is carrying out the plan.

3. Dealing with being short-handed

Purpose: To help students be flexible enough to cope with inconveniences without grumbling or panicking.

Activity: Take the same preparation list from (b) above. Now ask the group to imagine that one person has had to go home sick. Ask, "How can you reassign tasks to cover the absence?" Ideally, ask the whole group to work on this unless you have already had students practice being executive chef and you know they all expect someone to be given the lead.

Feedback: Use your own experience to approve of what they have done right, and suggest what else they might try for example, calling in someone else to help if they really can't get it done on their own, or calling around to see if another kitchen can supply a substitute for something they no longer have time to make.

4. Dealing with an unexpected request from a customer

Purpose: To emphasize flexibility.

Activity: Tell the group to imagine that you have just found out as the meal is being served that one of the guests is a vegetarian. The person will eat eggs and milk, but no other animal products. Ask, "How can we quickly provide a vegetarian main course for that guest so he won't have to wait too long for his meal?"

Congratulate any suggestions that are made right away, from serving the vegetables attractively alone, to adding an omelette, to rushing out to buy a specialty vegetarian dish from the supermarket.

Once you have three or four suggestions, work with the group to narrow them down. Remind them what's most important: a tasty meal on time. Which suggestions are tasty enough and quick enough? Can you help them improve on

any suggestion to make it work better for example, adding a cheese sauce to the vegetables?

Moving on to Module Two: Expanded Problem Solving

If you have finished these basic exercises with your students and want to do more, move on into Module Two. You have covered the first three skills in Part One. You can do the extra exercises in [Skill 2, Focussing](#), or you can go straight to the exercises in [Skill 4, Value Contributions](#).

INSTRUCTORS' GUIDE

MODULE TWO: Expanded Problem Solving Skills

(for life skills coaches and cook instructors)

Goals, Exercises, Questions, and Guidelines for Feedback

Using Module Two

This set of exercises is a complete program to build problem-solving skills for cook trainees. It starts with exercises that build basic thinking skills. It progresses into problem-solving students should be able to do in the kitchen near the end of their cook-training. It ends with optional exercises that take students into challenging situations they might face after their training, such as taking on more responsibility on the job or having to create a job for themselves.

These exercises assume that students have already had a basic life skills module. The exercises here can be added on as a module that begins with occasional exercises during the cook training and continues into a second life-skills module after the cooking unit. How many exercises to do and how far to go with the program will depend on your program and how much time you can make available.

Your main objective:

You want to help students build their ability to work well in the team environment of the kitchen:

To start with, you want them to be able to ask questions, collect information, and understand what is important about what they are doing.

Early in the program, you want them to become more independent: you still want them to check that they are doing things right, but you want them to check less often and be able to do more on their own.

Midway through the program, you want them to be able to plan effectively and work with each other. You want them to be able to handle routine situations on their own without forgetting anything, and you want them thinking ahead so that they can anticipate what will need doing and get ready ahead of time.

By the end of the program, you want them to be able to deal with inconveniences and unexpected changes, without getting frustrated, angry, or panicked.

As they leave the program, you want them to be ready to pick up new kitchen procedures as they need to on the job, and you want them to be able to adapt to new executive chefs' working styles.

Module Overview

Module Two, like Module One, gives you sample exercises that illustrate the kind of activities you can give students. You are encouraged to adapt exercises to suit your kitchen or your program, and your working style. Module Two covers a greater range of skills that you can help students to develop. This overview gives you a brief description of each of the three parts of the module ([See Exercises](#)). A more detailed description of the theory behind this program and the cook training goals it meets is in [Appendix A](#).

If you have already used Module One: You have covered the first three skills in Part One of Module Two. When you choose which exercises to do, you can do the extra exercises in Skill 2, [Focussing](#), or you can go straight to the exercises in [Skill 4, Value Contributions](#).

If you are beginning with Module Two: This is a complete program and you can follow it from the start. If you have access to a kitchen, there will be some exercises from Module One that you can add into the first part of Module Two if you like.

Individual activities to develop problem-solving skills and attitudes

The exercises in this level focus on one level of thinking at a time. There are exercises on slowing down and observing, exercises on figuring out what is important, exercises on recognizing choices, and exercises on reminding yourself that your needs matter too.

Learners who do not see themselves as problem-solvers will be able to use these exercises to show them how to start. They will begin to see every situation as an opportunity to see themselves as capable problem-solvers. Learners who have already come to see themselves as problem-solvers may want to check whether they are equally comfortable in all aspects of problem solving.

Problem-solvers need four main skills. This level gives them a chance to practice each one:

1. *Observe*. Gather information, recall information, notice details - without judging.
2. *Focus*. Realize what is most important to you, your co-workers, and your employer.
3. *See possibilities*. See that you have options – feel more in control.

Value contribution. Recognize that what you do matters, to you and to others: find a way to see what you are doing as worthwhile, and see what others are doing as equally worthwhile even when it is different.

Small group exercises to build teamwork skills

In this part, students focus on seeing how it helps to have a problem-solving attitude if they want to work well as part of a team on the job. The situations focus only on developing the skills needed to be part of a team. Everything needed is available, and there are no obstacles to success. However, there may be no direct instructions on what to do, so the learners must be able to

recognize an opportunity to go beyond mere routine. The learners are given specific tasks which will need them to co-operate as a team, without either passively following a leader, or going off independently and refusing to collaborate.

Teamwork needs everyone to understand what they must do, be able to do it, and finish in the time allowed. To do this, team members need the following skills:

1. *Recognize* what must be done : WHAT must happen
2. *Set priorities* and understand how each person's tasks fit into the whole: WHY are we doing this? What's important here?
3. *Divide tasks* between members of the team: WHO will do each part?
4. *Co-ordinate tasks* to meet a deadline: WHEN must this be done? WHERE can I find what I need to do it? HOW am I to do it – are there special instructions?

Monitor progress and adjust plans if needed

Team problem-solving in job-related situations

At this level, teams are dealing with the kinds of situations known to cause stress in kitchen work: change, demands from customers, supervisors and co-workers, equipment failure, being short-staffed, and so on. Team members need to have confidence that the team can do its best to deal with the stress. This level of team problem solving needs the skills built in the two previous parts of the program

1. *Carry out a task independently*, without detailed instructions
2. *Deal effectively with inconveniences* or problems
3. *Juggle competing priorities*
4. *Break a complex problem down* into smaller pieces to do one by one

Part 1: Activities to develop problem-solving skills and attitudes

Goals for this Part:

The exercises in this level focus on one level of thinking at a time. There are exercises on slowing down and observing, exercises on figuring out what is important, exercises on recognizing choices, and exercises on reminding yourself that your needs matter too.

Learners who do not see themselves as problem-solvers will be able to use these exercises to show them how to start. They will begin to see every situation as an opportunity to see themselves as capable problem-solvers. Learners who have already come to see themselves as problem-solvers may want to check whether they are equally comfortable in all aspects of problem solving.

Problem-solvers need four main skills. This level gives them a chance to practice each one:

1. *Observe*. Gather information, recall information, notice details - without judging.

2. *Focus.* Realize what is most important to you, your co-workers, and your employer
3. *See possibilities.* See that you have options – feel more in control
4. *Value contribution.* Recognize that what you do matters, to you and to others: find a way to see what you are doing as worthwhile, and see what others are doing as equally worthwhile even when it is different.

There are two handouts you can give to students before you begin the exercises: a self-test on problem solving and a list of helpful questions to guide students through the exercises. See [Self-Test # 1](#) to [Helpful Questions](#).

Student Handout

Self-Test # 1

Awareness of Problem-Solving Skills

Try this self-test to see what kind of a problem-solver you are.

	TRUE	FALSE
I like to deal with new situations		
Good workers need time to get ready before they start dealing with a problem		
If you're not quite sure what you were told to do, it's best to ask questions		
I can always see at least two choices for how I deal with a problem		
A good worker checks what the boss says to see if it makes sense		
I tend to notice everything that is going on around me		
Even the best workers make mistakes		
Before I do what other people want, I make sure I know why it's important to them.		

See [Answer Guide](#).

Student Handout

Helpful questions for Workplace Problem Solving

Problem-solvers need four main skills. You'll get exercises to help you practice each skill: As you practice, you might find it helps to ask yourself some of these questions.

Problem-solving skill	Questions to ask yourself
<p><i>Observe</i></p> <p>Can you notice details? Can you remember things that might help you? If you slow down to do this, you will be calmer and you will find it much easier to deal with any problem.</p>	<p>What do I already know that might help? What can I find that might help? What did I notice this time?</p>
<p><i>Focus</i></p> <p>Can you figure out what is most important to your employer and your co-workers? If you can, you'll be sure your effort is appreciated – you won't be wasting your time on something they will not want.</p>	<p>What will be the challenging part of this? What's going to be most important to my boss (or instructor)? Did I meet my expectations as well as my boss's?</p>
<p><i>See possibilities</i></p> <p>Can you see that you always have options that are safe to try? You will feel more in control. Problems and crises won't scare you.</p>	<p>What might happen that I should be ready for? What possibilities can I see? What would I change if I have to do this again?</p>
<p><i>Value contributions</i></p> <p>Can you always find a way to see what you are doing as worthwhile? If you can, you'll find it much easier to put in the effort to get the job done, and you'll get much more satisfaction from it..</p>	<p>What would work best for me here? What can I take away from this as a lesson for the future?</p>

EXERCISES

Skill 1: Observe

The student should be able to slow down and describe what is actually going on *without* judging it as right or wrong, good or bad. When done well, these exercises reduce stress by helping students focus on the here and now without worrying about anything else. Non-judgemental observation is very important in helping people really see what is really happening instead of only seeing what they expect to see.

There is a list of exercises for observation of kitchen tasks on p. 11, in the exercises for Module One. Any of those exercises can be repeated here. Three additional exercises are included.

A. Noticing how the kitchen is set up

Purpose: This exercise helps students keep looking for new information, without "shutting down" because they've already decided they've seen enough.

Activity: Ask students to go into the kitchen and look around. Tell them to remember the first 5 things they notice about the kitchen. (They can make notes if they need them to help remember)

As soon as everyone says they have five things, move them straight on to the next part: Ask them to go back and take a second look to find three more things.

Feedback: Ask each student in turn to name the eight things they noticed, before you say anything. This will help the students realize they are not looking for what you think is the one "right answer". There should be some overlap, and there should also be some things that one person noticed that nobody else did.

Congratulate them on how much they were able to notice.

Comment on one or two things that only one person noticed, and tell the students that's why it's so helpful to have a group of people working together two heads are better than one when it comes to gathering information and coming up with ideas.

B. Finding out how many people to prepare for

Purpose: To help students realize they can find information, even if it is not immediately in front of them

Activity: Ask students to figure out how many people they will be cooking for tomorrow. (Or any comparable information they might need the next day what is important is that it should be information that is not written down anywhere obvious, but can

be worked out.) Tell them you know it isn't written down anywhere yet. Suggest they treat it as a search what can they find that might help them figure out the answer? Give the group enough time to search for information last week's records, an observation of how many people are in the dining room today, etc.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* What did you find?

Guidelines: Ask for contributions from each member of the group until they have run out of information to suggest. (Again, ask everyone to share their ideas before you speak. This helps students realize they are not trying to second-guess your "perfect" answer.)

Comment on each idea say what it would help you figure out. For example, "The number of people here today for lunch would certainly help us plan for next Monday." Then, if you need to, push the students a bit further: "But we need to know how many we'll have on Friday, and Fridays are usually busier than Mondays. Start with the number you counted today. How many more people do you think we might have on Friday?"

C. Keeping an eye on the rest of the team

Purpose: This exercise helps remind students to monitor their progress relative to others.

Activity: Next time the students are in the kitchen, have them stop halfway through their assigned tasks and take a one-minute break to look around. Make notes: What is everyone else doing?

Feedback: *Instructor question:* What did you notice?

Guidelines: Ask each student in turn to answer the same question before you say anything. This will help the students realize they are not looking for what you think is the one "right answer". Different students will be likely to notice different things.

After you have heard from everyone, congratulate them for what they did see. Then move them a little further forward by asking whether they could tell from what they saw whether everyone would be done on time, or whether they noticed anything that might make them concerned that something was going too slowly.

Use your own experience to tell them what they might look for next time to tell whether someone else may need help.

Skill 2: Focus

The student should be able to describe what is most important to an employer or co-worker, using clues in what is said and done. For cooks, the overall focus is clear: customer satisfaction. The meal must be ready on time and it must look and taste appealing. The cook-trainee needs to be able to see how kitchen practices contribute to this goal. Why are they doing things this way? Why does it matter that they cut vegetables this way, not that? Why do they use this pan, not that one?

A student who can focus properly can do more than just remember to keep the customer in mind. The student can also figure out what's important to the instructor or executive chef why does this chef want it done his way, not anyone else's?

A. Learning to Ask Why

Purpose: To show students that they can and should ask questions to help them understand.

Activity: Do a demonstration for students for example, how to debone a chicken. Ask everyone to be ready with a "Why?" question when you're done.

Feedback: Guidelines: Go round the group and answer each question in turn. Make sure your answer covers the immediate task and the goal of customer satisfaction for example, "I pull out the breastbone so the chicken will lie flat and cook evenly. Then the customer won't find any raw pieces when she cuts into it."

B. Reading clues to figure out what's expected

Purpose: To help students see that they can figure out someone else's expectations.

Activity: Next time the students complete an assignment for you, ask each student in turn to say what he/she thinks is more important to you: getting the done on time, or getting it done just the way you like it ?

Feedback: Instructor question: How did you decide that was most important to me?

Guidelines: first, comment only on if their way of deciding is helpful for example, noticing how impatient you seem when an assignment isn't ready on time is a good clue to your priorities. However, guessing is very unreliable.

After you've commented on the different ways of deciding, tell the students which is more important to you and why.

Then take them a step further: suggest one way that they can ask you directly what your priorities are give them a question you are comfortable answering. For example, you may not like to hear, "I don't see why you do it that way", or "That's

not the way I learned to do it." You may be much happier to hear, "You are doing it differently than I've seen it done before. Can you tell me why you're doing it that way?"

C. Getting priorities straight, with the customer in mind

Purpose: To set priorities so that what's important gets done on time

Activity: Give the students the next day's menu for example, Cheese Omelette with Fried Potatoes and Peas, Jello with whipped topping. Give them a starting time and a service time: For example, it's "9 a.m. now and we need to be ready by 11:45 to serve at noon." Ask the students to work together to decide what their first priority will be. what will they start with?

Feedback: *Instructor question:* What did your group choose to do first? Why did you choose that to do first?

Guidelines: Comment on what is important about whatever they have chosen, even if it is not what you would have picked.

If they picked what you would have picked, write it down, and take them the next step further. Ask them to explain how that works to please the customer. Then take them one more step and ask, "What would be next most important?"

If they picked something you would not have chosen, point out any difficulties your experience has shown you. "In my experience, if you start with that, what will happen is". Then suggest a better time for that item, and write it down with space above it. Then take them one step further. "Which of the other things we have to do might be better to do first?" Write that in above their first suggestion. Keep going until you have the first two or three steps listed in priority order.

If you repeat this exercise later in the course, they can compile a complete preparation order.

Skill 3: Seeing Possibilities:

For each of these scenarios, the student should be able to come up with two possible actions, and should be able to describe or role-play both. What is most important about this is that students should realise there can be several options that are *safe to try*. If they can't check with the executive chef every minute they have a question, they have to be able to figure out what they might safely try on their own.

Exercises for this skill are given in Module One, ["Seeing Possibilities"](#) to ["Observation and Seeing Possibilities Combined"](#). Five more difficult exercises are added here.

A. Handling a problem with an order

Purpose: To create choices in advance.

Activity: Imagine an order has come back because something is wrong with it perhaps it's an overcooked steak, or perhaps it's the wrong order. You don't think the mistake is your fault. Ask each student to think of two ways he/she might deal with the situation.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* "How does this work for you? How might it work for you and for the customer?"

Guidelines: Use your own experience here. Your main concern is to get the students thinking for themselves about how other people might feel, and how to meet everyone's needs. Offer the students any stories you have about your own experience; share what worked and what didn't. Remind the students how helpful it is to plan in advance for how to deal with something going wrong, especially when it isn't your fault.

B. Asking for a practicum placement

Purpose: To find more than one comfortable way to ask a difficult question.

Activity: Ask student to think about finding a practicum placement. Imagine one place they might want to work. Ask the student to come up with two different ways he/she could ask the person in charge if a practicum is possible.

Feedback: *Guidelines:* First, ask who has two different questions. Congratulate everyone who managed to come up with two. If anyone got stuck and could only think of one, or none, tell them not to worry, they'll get some ideas from the other people. (Reinforce the idea they should get from the observation exercises, that it always helps to have someone else to suggest ideas.)

Now move on to the actual suggestions. Get each person in turn to describe their ways of asking for a placement.

Instructor question: What do you think will work well about both of these ways?

If the way of asking seems likely to work, say so. If it seems good, but you wouldn't have thought of it yourself, say so you want to reinforce their belief that they can come up with good ideas and you aren't the only one with right answers!

If they suggest something that seems problematic to you, tell them how you might react: "If I was hearing you say that, I might think ...". Ask them to see if they can think of a better way. If they can't, remind them not to worry it can be hard to think of the right thing to say. That's why this exercise is good practice it helps them be ready ahead of time with good choices.

C. Feeling more "yourself" in an interview

Purpose: To help students feel they still have control and reduce their nervousness in challenging situations.

Activity: Get students to air their feelings about going for interviews. Some may have had extensive experience, some may have had little or none. When they have had a chance to speak, tell them you're going to give them an exercise that may help them feel more comfortable.

One of the tough parts of going for an interview is feeling they should accept you as you are, yet also feeling they won't accept you unless you are dressed up just right. The challenge is to dress in a way that feels true to yourself, and also pleases an employer.

Ask each student to come to the next session in an outfit they would wear to an interview. Anyone who has had successful interviews can wear what they wore then that will help show less experienced people what can work. Everyone should bring at least one additional item of clothing, or another outfit, that they could also wear to an interview.

Feedback *Instructor question:* What kind of place would you wear (or have you worn) this outfit to? How good do you feel in it?

Guidelines: After the students have said where they would wear their outfits, ask them what they like about their own and each other's outfits. Remind them the focus is on having choices so that they can feel more at ease. Draw on your own experience of interviewing to suggest ways people can change their outfits depending on what kind of place they are applying to. If the students want to talk about other aspects of the interviewing process, move into that; otherwise just thank them for their effort in coming in dressed up. The purpose of this exercise is not to stress "best" ways to dress, just to help students realise they have *safe* options to try.

D. Imagining how to handle criticism or instructions

Purpose: To be able to see choices under pressure

- Activity:** Ask the student to imagine either one of the following situations whichever one you think the student can picture clearly
- a. the instructor has just asked him/her to do something he/she hates to do. What are two different ways the student might react?
 - b. an executive chef has just yelled at him/her for something that doesn't seem fair. What are two different ways the student might react?

Feedback: For this exercise, make sure every student does have two choices. If any student can't come up with two, ask them to try again perhaps even take overnight to think about it.

Instructor question: Which way do you usually react? What do you think might happen if you reacted the other way?

Guidelines: Again, the main goal is to help the student see there is more than one way to react. Your feedback should focus on the fact that they have a choice. some ways may be better than others, but the most important thing is that they can slow down and remember to make a choice instead of simply reacting in the heat of the moment.

As you comment on each student's choices, congratulate them for coming up with two options.

Limit your comments on each choice to saying how you might feel if the student said or did that to you. Stress that that's just your personal feeling and other people may feel differently the point is that we all need to learn to treat each person the way they'll react best to.

E. Preparing for what it will be like to be very busy

Purpose: To help students think about situations they might not have experienced personally.

Activity: Give the students an example of a situation you have run into that your training didn't quite prepare you for. For example, you might ask the students to imagine that they are preparing for a banquet and they are going to find themselves very busy making sure trays are refilled. What are two different ways they might make sure they can keep up with the demand for full trays of food? Give them any extra details they may need to help them imagine the situation if nothing like it has come up in training.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* What do you think will work well about both of these ways?

Guidelines: Use your own experience to tell them what you did and whether it worked, and to tell them how their own suggestions might work.

If you have time, use this example to start them talking about what they worry about what do they think might be tough to deal with on the job? For every situation they raise, see if they can come up with at least one safe thing they could try. See if you and the rest of the group can also come up with ideas.

Skill 4: Value Contributions:

For each of these scenarios, the students should be able to describe actions that fit well with their own talents and interests, to see why it is worth the effort to take part. The aim is to be able to see what is worthwhile in the activity, what is worthwhile in their own contributions, and especially what is valuable about other people's contributions.

It's very easy to think your own contribution is the greatest if you think you're working the hardest, or to see your own contribution as worthless just because someone else seems to do the same job better. Sometimes you also have to be able to realise that you're a good person, but you're in the wrong kitchen for your temperament and skills. For every situation, students need to learn to ask themselves, "What can I learn by being involved?" and "What is valuable about what the other people are doing?"

A. Choosing a new dish to learn

Purpose: To help the student realize that he/she has something to offer and something to gain from being a cook.

Activity: Ask the student to imagine that he or she is offered an opportunity to prepare a new dish. (If necessary, get them to look ahead in their textbook or on menu plans to find something they've haven't learned yet.) What would the student choose?

Feedback: *Instructor question:* What would you like to learn by trying this dish?

Guidelines: Prompt the student to give an answer rather than "I don't know", and then to explain it with something more concrete than "It just seems interesting/different." Do they like making sauces? Do they like trying new tastes? Do they like to experiment with new techniques?

Keep going until you have a sense that the student doesn't know what would be personally enjoyable or interesting about trying this dish. Explain if the student will have a chance to try that dish if so, say when. If not, suggest another dish that the students will be learning that you think this person might also enjoy. Your aim here is to encourage the student to start thinking in terms of being a good cook with particular talents.

B. The best help is the most willing help

Purpose: To help students see that the best contribution they can make is usually the one they are most willing to make. Everyone's talents are different. There is no point

one person volunteering to do the task he hates most, if someone else actually prefers to do that. What you do with most enthusiasm, you usually do fastest and best.

Activity: Ask the students to imagine that they have all been asked to pitch in and help with a surprise party for a staff member. Ask each student to decide what he or she would volunteer to do. (Remind them that setting up a room, inviting people, and making decorations are all part of the party there may not even be any food to prepare.)

Feedback: *Instructor question:* When you hear each person's idea, "Is this something you enjoy doing?"

Guidelines: If the answer is yes, ask what they enjoy about it. As you continue round the group, remember to point out when you hear different people enjoying different jobs, and remind them that when everyone pitches in, there's a chance everyone can get to do what they like best. People who enjoy what they have to do tend to get it done. People who have to do something they don't like tend to put it off.

If anyone says they do not enjoy the job they suggested, ask what they do enjoy, and they ask why they chose the job they suggested.

When everyone has spoken, ask if anyone would change jobs now they've heard everyone. Whatever they say, you can close the exercise by saying, "You've just had a good practice in finding a sensible way to divide up jobs so you can be sure they'll get done."

Purpose: To help students see advantages in going beyond the minimum expected of them in a job.

Activity: Ask each student what he/she would be able to do by coming in ten minutes early to work. Give the student enough time to come up with one or two ideas.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* "What might you like about doing this?"

Guidelines: Listen to the students' suggestions. Encourage them to keep thinking as the course goes on. Tell them how you've seen employers react to students who come in early.

Part 2: Small group exercises to build teamwork skills

Goals for this Part:

Learners focus on seeing how having a problem-solving attitude makes a difference to how well they can be part of a team on the job. The situations focus only on developing the skills needed

to be part of a team. Everything needed is available, and there are no obstacles to success. However, there may be no direct instructions on what to do, or the learners must be able to recognize an opportunity to go beyond mere routine. The learners are given specific tasks which will need them to co-operate as a team, without either passively following a leader, or going off independently and refusing to collaborate.

Teamwork needs everyone to understand what they must do, be able to do it, and finish in the time allowed. To do this, team members need the following skills:

Recognize what must be done : WHAT must happen

Set priorities and understand how each person's tasks fit into the whole: WHY are we doing this?

What's important here?

Divide tasks fairly: WHO will do each part?

Co-ordinate tasks to meet a deadline: WHEN must this be done? WHERE can I find what I need to do it? HOW am I to do it – are there special instructions?

Monitor progress and adjust plans if needed

There are three **handouts** you can give to students before you begin the exercises: a self-test on awareness of teamwork, a list of helpful questions to guide students through the exercises, and a worksheet. See [Self-Test #2](#) to [INDIVIDUAL WORKSHEET](#).

Student Handout

Self-Test #2 *Awareness of Teamwork*

	TRUE	FALSE
I usually like working with other people		
When I am working with other people, I always check how they are doing		
I check my instructions before I start		
I make notes to remind myself what I should do		
It is good to ask for help as well as give it		
Everyone can help to make a team work		

See [Answer Guide](#).

Student Handout

Helpful Questions for Teamwork

To work well on a team, everyone needs to understand what they must do. They must be able to do it. And they must finish in the time allowed. You'll be given exercises that help you practice this. As you try them, you might find it helpful to ask yourself some of these questions:

Team skill	Question to ask yourself
Recognize what must be done	WHAT has to be done?
Set priorities and understand how each person's tasks fit in	WHY are we doing this? What's important here?
Divide tasks so everyone has something to do	WHO will do each part?
Co-ordinate tasks to meet a deadline	WHEN must this be done? WHERE can I find what I need to do it? HOW are we to do it? – are there any special instructions?
Monitor progress and adjust plans if needed	Are we on schedule?

INDIVIDUAL WORKSHEET – NAME: _____

This sheet may help you organize your ideas and keep track of what you need to do

What is the team's job?

Notes for my part of the team's job:

WHAT is my part of the job?	
WHEN does each part have to be done?	
WHERE can I find what I need?	
HOW are we to do it? – special instructions	
WHY is this important?	

Reflecting:

How did we work together as a team?

EXERCISES:

Skill 1: Recognize what must be done: WHAT must happen

Handling food donations wisely

Purpose: To handle a situation without losing sight of the big picture.

Activity: Ask the students to imagine they are working for a soup kitchen which has received a donation of 50 kg strawberries. What is the best way to use the strawberries?

Feedback: *Instructor question:* "Tell me why you'd like to use them this way."

Guidelines: You're looking for ideas that include more options than just to use all the strawberries right away. If the suggestions do assume they must use them the same day, you can ask, "Will you be able to do this and still get today's lunch ready on time?" Then suggest they might look for ways to make good use of the berries without having to use them right away.

Encourage students to think of ideas such as freezing the berries, making jam, or offering some to another kitchen that could use them right away.

Skill 2: Divide tasks between team members: WHO will do each part?

Making good use of extra help

Purpose: To see a way to make everyone's contributions worthwhile.

Activity: Ask the students to think about the meal they have just prepared and imagine that next time they do it, there would be one extra person available to help prepare it. Ask them how they would divide up the tasks to include one more person, keep everyone busy and get the meal ready on time?

Feedback: *Instructor question:* Can you explain why you've divided up the work this way?

Guidelines: Watch for inefficient use of the extra person comment on whether anyone will end up standing around. Ask what other prep or kitchen tasks might be done while the meal is being prepared, so that someone who has some extra time can turn to those tasks. Your main objective here is to help the students see whether they have delegated effectively to every member of the team.

Skill 3: Set priorities and understand how each person's tasks fit into the whole

WHY are we doing this? What's important here?

Helping each other to avoid mistakes in orders

Purpose: To help students stay focussed on the overall goal of their efforts: customer satisfaction.

Activity: Ask students to imagine that they work at a restaurant that was incredibly busy during their last shift. At least ten orders got mixed up, or weren't ready on time, or were sent back by the customers because they were cooked wrong. Ask students, "How can you help each other be sure all the orders are right the next time you get that busy?"

Feedback: *Instructor question:* For each suggestion: "How will this work? Explain it for me."

Guidelines: Use your own experience here: share with students what it's been like when you've worked in a busy place. Congratulate them on any ideas they have that you think will work, and especially on any that you wouldn't have thought of. If they suggest something you think might not work, tell them what you think might happen if they tried it.

After you've heard from everyone and commented on the ideas, remind the students that it really does help to think through what they'll do when it's busy before they get too busy to think. Even if they don't get the best ideas ahead of time, it helps just to have some idea of what they might try.

Skill 4: Co-ordinate tasks to meet a deadline: WHEN must this be done?

WHERE can I find what I need to do it?

How am I to do it – are there special instructions?

Checking a set-up

Purpose: To get students to work together to prevent problems.

Activity: Ask a group of students to check a banquet site (or equivalent arrangement that is set up in advance) to see that everything is set up right. Remind them they want to be sure to prevent any last-minute problems. Tell them what would be expected, and suggest one or two examples of things they might check, to get them started.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* What did you check?

Guidelines: Congratulate them on whatever they did think to do. Check whether they divided up the tasks, or whether several of them ended up making the same checks.

Take them a step further by asking if they checked _____ (insert whatever you think they are least likely to anticipate)

Part 3: Team problem-solving in job-related situations

Goals for this Part:

At this level, teams are dealing with the kinds of situations known to cause stress in kitchen work: change, demands from customers, supervisors and co-workers, equipment failure, being short-staffed, and so on. Team members need to have confidence that the team can do its best to deal with the stress. This level of team problem solving needs the skills built in the two previous parts of the program.

1. Carry out a task independently, without detailed instructions
2. Deal effectively with inconveniences or problems
3. Juggle competing priorities
4. Break a complex problem down into smaller pieces to do one by one

There are two **handouts** you can give to students before you begin the exercises: a self-test on dealing with difficulties and a list of helpful questions to guide students through the exercises. See [Self-Test #3](#) and [Helpful Questions](#).

Student Handout

Self-Test #3 *Dealing with Difficulties*

	TRUE	FALSE
Having problems means you're doing something wrong		
A good workplace has its share of crises		
The boss is not the only one who should sort out problems		
It's best to change your original plan rather than stick to it because you know it worked before		
There can be more than one right way to handle a situation		
Mistakes happen; it's best just to fix them and move on		
Even the toughest problems have easy parts		

Student Handout

Helpful Questions - Dealing with Difficulties

As you work on more difficult problems, you may find it helpful to ask yourself these questions:

Team problem-solving skills	Questions to ask
Carry out a task independently, without detailed instructions	Where can I begin? Who can I check with to be sure I'm on the right track?
Deal effectively with inconveniences or problems	What's the problem we have to fix? What's the most important thing we have to be able to do? How can we get started?
Juggle competing priorities	What is important to do here? What ideas do I have that might work?
Break a complex problem down into smaller pieces to do one by one	What could I do in 10 minutes that might help me a little bit with this? Where can I go for help? What part of this do I already know how to do?

EXERCISES

Skill 1: Carry out a task independently, without detailed instructions

A. To work as a team to choose a menu

Purpose: To work together in a way that meets everyone's interests.

Activity: Tell students to imagine they have to choose a menu for a lunchtime celebration for example, to end their course. They will be part of the celebration, so they will be eating the food they prepare. To be sure they enjoy it, the menu has to be one that gives every person in the group at least one food that he or she really likes.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* How did you decide on this menu?

Guidelines: Check who likes which item on the menu, to be sure everyone does like something. Double-check by asking several people why they chose that, or what they like about it. Watch for any indication that any team member did not participate fully, or dominated the decision making. If you find out that anyone did not get his or her needs met, ask the group to revise the menu until it works better for everyone.

Skill 2: Deal effectively with inconveniences or problems

A. Dealing with a supply problem

Purpose: To be flexible when dealing with short supplies.

Activity: Give the students a menu. Tell them the supplier has not delivered an ingredient that was important to the planned menu for example, not enough lemons to make the lemon tarts for dessert - and there is not quite enough still on hand. Ask students to decide what substitutions or alternative recipes are possible, given what you have on hand. Let them go and look at your actual supplies to see what they can suggest.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* Why did you choose this?

Guidelines: Encourage any suggestions that go beyond simply trying to get more of the missing ingredient. If students are unable to come up with any suggestion that works, give them ideas based on your own experience, and repeat the exercise with a different missing ingredient.

B. Coping with an unexpected absence

Purpose: To cope with being short-handed.

Activity: Ask students to think about the next meal they are going to have to prepare. Ask them to imagine that one person suddenly has to go home sick. How would they re-assign tasks to complete the planned meal?

Feedback: *Instructor question:* "Will you be able to get everything done?"

Guidelines: Use your own experience here. Depending on the meal and the number of people involved, they may be able to get ready on time with one less person, or they may have to realize they must call in someone else. Hear their ideas and comment on them.

Repeat the exercise with a different meal.

C. Dealing with a crisis: loss of prepared dishes

Purpose: To deal quickly and patiently with a crisis.

Activity: Ask students to imagine they are working at a banquet. The dessert table collapses when a leg breaks after it is set up, and 30 desserts are lost. It is only half an hour before the customers will arrive. How can the desserts be replaced on short notice?

Feedback: *Instructor question:* "How did you decide to do this?"

Guidelines: You're looking for a sense that the students could get going quickly on an alternative. In a crisis like this, you would not want them to waste time wondering why it happened, or worrying about trying to make desserts just as elaborate as the ones they've lost. You want to hear quick and practical alternatives, such as icecream, frozen cakes that can be thawed, fresh fruit. Go round the group until you've got two or three good suggestions. Congratulate them on these particular ideas.

Pick one and take them the next step ask them to review with you how they'd get the extra desserts ready quickly.

Skill 3: Juggle competing priorities

A. Planning a fund-raising dinner without help

Purpose: To balance appearance and cost.

Activity: Ask the students to imagine they've been asked to help with a fund-raising dinner for a group they belong to. (The aim is to give them a situation where there will not be an executive chef to make the decision for them.) Explain that you know this isn't a situation they have been explicitly trained for, but you'd like them to see what it's like to try the kinds of problem an executive chef may face. Ask them as a group to use the recipes they do know to decide on a menu will please the donors but not cost too much to make.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* How did you decide on this menu?

Guidelines: Ask what they think is appealing about the menu, and what they think it might cost. The main objective here is to see if they were able to use information they already have, and estimates or guesses where necessary, to find a menu that will meet both the objectives: customer appeal and low cost.

If they have met both objectives, congratulate them. If they have lost track of appeal or cost, ask them to see if they can improve the menu.

B. Catching up after a late start

Purpose: To balance speed and quality.

Activity: Ask students to imagine that they are working at a cafeteria, preparing a menu they've done before. (Give them the menu). Tell them to picture that the person who was supposed to open up the building didn't show up on time, and now they are half an hour behind schedule. How will they get ready in time for customers arriving?

Feedback: *Instructor question:* If you can't do everything you would normally do, what are you going to be absolutely sure you do?

Guidelines: Get the students to walk you through their plan. What will they do first? You want them to suggest where the meal preparation can be streamlined or speeded up to get the meal ready on time, rather than simply try to work faster to do everything they'd normally do. If they have trouble, use your own experience to suggest what can be streamlined or changed, and what they must be careful not to compromise on.

Skill 4: Break a complex problem down into smaller pieces to do one by one

A. Laying out a new kitchen

Purpose: To apply what they've learned in the course to thinking ahead: seeing how a new set up might be arranged.

Activity: Give students a diagram of a room that might be used as a kitchen - or take them into a space that you could imagine being converted into a kitchen. Ask students to imagine that a new soup kitchen (or kitchen of any other type they are familiar with) is opening up. Have the whole group decide how the space available should best be set up for proper storage, food preparation, and serving.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* How does this match what you've learned about good kitchen operation?

Guidelines: You are primarily looking for how much they have noticed and remembered about the space they have worked in, and what they have been taught in the course about proper food handling and storage. Congratulate them on whatever they remember and apply correctly. If the space they have been shown might create some problems, discuss these with the students. At this point in the course, you should be able to act like one of the team, working with them to help solve any problems they haven't figured out on their own.

B. Designing your own job

Purpose: To see that even a very difficult situation has pieces small enough to get started on. If you can start somewhere without being afraid, you can usually keep going.

Activity: Tell students that this challenge you're going to give them is one that everyone finds hard, no matter where they've worked. Ask them to imagine that their fears have come true and there is no employment is immediately available. Break them into groups of 3 or 4. Ask each group to figure out a way that they might be able to work together to make some money using skills learnt in the program. Give them enough time to talk about the idea and think of a plan overnight or a day or two may be needed.

Feedback: *Instructor question:* "What do you like about this idea?"

Guidelines: Ask each group to share what it came up with. Sharing will help each group see that there are possibilities, and the possibilities aren't the same for everyone. This scenario is challenging enough that students should be congratulated for any idea they have that is believable as a legitimate business, regardless of whether it fits their present skill level or not. Some examples might include pie-making, catering, or giving cooking lessons to friends.

If the groups have come up with ideas that they really like, take them just one step further: ask them what one or two things they might do right away if they ever

wanted to follow up on this idea. Examples might include talking to people who do that work, asking self-employed friends for advice on what it's like to work for yourself, asking friends whether they'd use such a service. You might give extra credit or a small reward to anyone brave enough to take this step during the next week.

Answer Guide

Self-Test #1: Awareness of Problem-Solving Skills (Module Two: Part 1)

1. If you answered "true" to this question, the good news is you have a head-start as a workplace problem solver. People who enjoy the challenge of new situations are well-suited to problem solving in the atmosphere of a busy kitchen. If you answered "false", you are like most people: somewhat hesitant or anxious in new situations. Learning problem solving strategies can help you be more confident in new situations.
2. It is true that all workers need time to prepare to deal with new problems. However, as you become a more experienced on the job problem solver, you will have more problem-solving strategies available to you and will be able to respond more quickly to day-to-day problems.
3. True! It is *always* best to ask questions if you don't understand what is required of you. This is often very hard for inexperienced workers but is absolutely necessary for communication and teamwork.
4. If you answered "true", congratulations! You are a natural at problem-solving. On the job, it is best to always have a backup plan. If you answered "false", start practicing this approach in your day-to-day problem-solving as well as in your cook training program.
5. True. This does not mean "challenging" the boss's directions. It does mean checking to see that you have correctly understood what the boss meant if you asked to do something that doesn't quite "make sense".
6. True. This is an important skill to have or to learn as a workplace problem-solver. In a kitchen workplace, this skill is critical!
7. True. All workers at all levels make mistakes. The difference between successful and unsuccessful workers is how they react to those mistakes. Successful workers take responsibility for their mistakes and, most importantly, learn new problem solving skills from those mistakes.

True. If you understand not only what your boss wants you to do, but why, it will help you to be more successful in that work environment. Knowing what are top priorities for your boss in any situation (eg: food presentation) will help you make the "right" decisions in stressful situations.

Answer Guide

Self-Test #2: Awareness of Teamwork (Module Two: Part 2)

1. True. This one is an absolute must for a professional cook. Even if you tend to be a "loner" in your off-hours, you need to be a team player at work!
2. True. In order for a team to be successful, all the players need to be doing their parts successfully. A good team member checks to see how others are doing and helps where needed, even if "it's not my job".
3. True. Better to double check before you start, then to risk a major problem later on that could damage the team effort.
4. True. An essential strategy for managing the "multi-tasking" demands of a busy kitchen.
5. True. Asking for help from other team members, as well as giving it, helps strengthen working relationships.

True. All of us are skilled in different ways. We work best when we perform tasks we enjoy. A good workplace recognizes and encourages workers in areas where they "shine" (which may be the very areas that other team members prefer to avoid).

Answer Guide

Self-Test #3: Dealing with Difficulties (Module Two: Part 3)

1. False. Having problems at work means you're just like everyone else! Using those problems as opportunities to learn and to develop problem-solving skills means you are going to be a longterm workplace "survivor".
2. True. All workplaces go through periods of crisis and day-to-day "mini-crises". A good workplace is characterized by strong working teams and supportive leadership and is able to handle stressful situations without damaging working relationships.
3. False. All team members should pitch in to solve small problems as they occur.
4. False. If it ain't broke don't fix it! Remember, though, to always have a back-up plan or strategy available.
5. True. There are frequently many "right" ways to handle a situation. What counts as "right" depends on particular work situations and culture. That's why it's important to know as much as possible about what solutions count as "right" where you work.
6. True. Keep your focus on the team effort rather than allowing yourself to be distracted by a small mistake.

True. Tough problems can seem overwhelming even to experienced on-the-job problems solvers. Finding a "piece" of the problem you know you can start on and get "right" helps build your confidence in tackling the tougher bits.

APPENDIX A

The Learning Theory

The exercises in *Team Problem Solving for Cook Trainees* are based on a model for improving thinking that has been used in adult upgrading materials in other areas such as writing and critical thinking. It uses three main principles to build the learners' skills.

Problem Solving Principles

1. Thinking of ourselves as problem solvers:

If we see ourselves as people who can solve problems, then we act constructively we don't just react or blindly follow a routine. We think ahead. We anticipate difficulties so we can take steps to prevent them. We look at the "big picture", not just our little corner of it. We know what our team mates are doing and realize how our actions affect them. Even if it's not our responsibility to direct the work or solve the problem, we still try to guess what the supervisor will do we make sure we are ready to respond. Better still, we understand the reasons behind the orders we are given so we follow them intelligently. If we have the opportunity to take on more responsibility, we can welcome it. It's all a question of attitude seeing ourselves not just as competent workers but also as people who can and should show initiative.

2. Consciously guiding our thinking:

The guiding principle behind these exercises is that our thinking improves when we learn to ask the right questions to direct ourselves. Instead of moving forward on automatic pilot, we learn to prompt ourselves with questions that make us stop, look, and think more carefully.

At first, the questions come from outside and we need to remind ourselves to use them. As we become more confident, we don't need to be reminded to ask the questions they become part of how we deal with challenges.

3. Being systematic:

If we can break down each problem we face into a consistent series of smaller steps, we can introduce a consistent set of guiding questions that will help us make sure we have covered everything we need to think about. In the model which follows, every problem is set up in three steps, and each step has four questions. When students work through a problem, question by question, they can be sure they are paying full attention to everything that they need to handle the situation well. When students use the same steps and the same questions in other exercises and at different levels of difficulty, they can see that the technique is versatile. It will be able to help them in a wide variety of challenges.

The particular questions suggested here are based on the "adjunct question grid" already used in adult upgrading educational materials. They have been modified to suit the teamwork approach of cooking.

Problem Solving Model

The problem-solving model presented here encourages students to see themselves as capable thinkers. It breaks each problem into manageable stages, and provides consistent guiding questions for each stage. The problems start at a simple and positive level and then increase gradually in difficulty, so that students can develop their confidence by building on success. The model uses three main components:

1. Breaking a problem down into stages to make it easier to manage:

Solving a problem can be divided into three stages:

Preparing: the stage where the problem-solver is alone, thinking ahead to be ready to deal with something new.

At this stage the problem-solver needs to be able to anticipate what the challenge might be, so that it does not catch him or her unprepared what will be new, or impossible to predict in advance? To get ready for the challenge, the problem solver needs to pull together all the resources that might help: information, skills, and mental readiness.

Acting: the stage where problem solvers come together as a team, discuss the situation, propose and compare options, choose a plan, and carry it out. At this stage, the problem solvers need to recognize what to focus on. Do they have their priorities straight? They will need to know what is going to be most important to their employer, because that will set the boundaries for what they can do. Within those boundaries, they will need to work out what options they have when they draw on their actual knowledge and skills and available resources. From these options, they will have to choose the one that will do what their employer wants in the way they can most comfortably do it.

Reflecting: the stage where the team, or an individual problem solver, is able to review the outcome and use that feedback to see what to keep the same or change for next time. At this stage, the problem solvers need to check whether they measured up to their own and their employer's expectations. Did the solution work? If so, what do they need to remember so they can do just as well next time? Did anything go wrong? If so, what could be done differently next time out? This is the stage that consolidates the problem-solvers' skills and helps them realize that they can rise to challenges.

2. Covering all the aspects of the problem:

At every stage of dealing with a problem, the most important thing is to be sure we have covered all the bases. Do we really understand everything we need to know to be able to

work out a solution? The following four types of questions cover all of the factors, from observation to wise personal judgment.

Observation: These questions remind us to gather our resources. For example, "What have we got that we can work with?" We check what is literally there - what we see, what we hear, what is on hand. We also check what our minds have available: what we remember, and what skills we have. When we ask these questions, we slow down to observe carefully and to search our memory for anything that might help.

These questions are good for reminding us not to rush ahead and act, but instead to stop and take careful stock of what the situation really is.

Focus: These questions remind us to be sure we have understood what we are trying to do. What is most important to focus on, and does it actually make sense to us? For example, "What's going to be most important to the boss?" When you are solving a problem on your own, this usually means you have digested the situation well enough to be able to pick out what is most important to you. In a job situation, that usually means you also know what is most important to your employer. For example, what will your employer expect you to get done first?

These questions are good for reminding us not to assume we know what we are supposed to do, but to stop and check that we have got it right.

Analysis: These questions remind us to be sure we recognize all our options and understand the consequences. For example, "What options do we have?" Before we get too committed to one solution, have we realized that we might have choices? Do we understand the consequences of our choices? Have we understood how we got into this situation in the first place, so we can anticipate it or prevent it in future?

These questions are good for making us keep our minds open and also remember to think through how a situation might seem to other people or from another perspective.

Personalizing: These questions remind us to be sure we are respecting our own needs as well as the needs of others. For example, "How can I make a worthwhile contribution?" What can we give, or get, that is worthwhile? How can we become better people and contribute to our communities? How can we uphold our values and grow as individuals? Are we making sure that our decisions make sense in the actual context in which we have to carry them out? These questions are good for reminding ourselves that we are people first, and employees second.

3. **Introducing teamwork:**

For all the same reasons that some learners need help in developing a problem-solving attitude, they also need help learning how to work in teams. This program applies all the

thinking skills to becoming comfortable as a member of a team, depending on others and contributing to others.

4. Gradually increasing levels of difficulty:

The aim is to build on success. Learners need to feel they can meet the challenges they are faced with. Some adult learners returning to school have already learned to see themselves as having choices and can tackle problems. For them, the main skill needed is to recognize and understand the steps they are already taking in dealing with a problem, so they can take the steps more consciously and carefully. Other adult learners have never been encouraged to make their own choices or see themselves as competent decision-makers. They need to begin with more understanding of themselves as having choices, and being able to choose to contribute to a team.

For learners who have trouble seeing choices or believing in themselves as decision-makers, there is a selection of warm-up exercises to help them adjust to this more independent way to meet challenges. Learners who already have some problem-solving skills can move directly to the four-level sequence of job-related challenges. This suggested sequence moves gradually from the least difficult, where only one element is unexpected, to the most difficult, where many elements and steps must be sorted out.

APPENDIX B

How this Program Meets Employers' and Learners' Needs

Meeting employers' needs

1. Teamwork

In most of today's workplaces, not just kitchens, teamwork is essential to success. No single person handles the whole job from start to finish. The tasks are divided up between different people. Co-ordination between them is vital to getting the job on time.

It's not enough just to do your own small piece, following orders and not thinking about why you are doing what you are doing. Each member of the team has to remember what the "big picture" the overall job is, so that his or her piece of the task is ready on time and is done in the right way to fit into what the next person needs. If you have two orders of nachos to get ready, you need to know which one is for an appetizer and which one is for a main course, so you will remember to coordinate the right one with the steak that is coming later.

The exercises in this program develop all the skills described in the *National Occupational Standards for Line Cooks* (Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism, Vancouver, B.C. 1996):

- Identify team objectives
- Identify each team member's roles and responsibilities identify how you fit in
- Be aware of impact of your actions on others
- Offer assistance to team members when help is needed, if possible
- Ask for help when you need it
- Give encouragement and positive feedback to team members Share information and skills
- Take pride in team accomplishments and your part in them

2. Problem-solving attitude

Unless you are the boss, someone higher up than you are is responsible for figuring things out and giving you and everyone else their orders. But even if you are following orders and not giving them, you still need a problem-solving attitude. It is important to understand why you have been given these particular orders, and to know how your job fits in with everyone else's.

Reasoning theory says that none of us do our best reasoning under pressure. Even the person responsible for giving the orders might easily slip up or miss out something in the fast pace of a busy kitchen. Everyone listening has a responsibility to make sure the orders are making sense, and to ask politely if they are not. The person giving the orders needs alert, problem-solving listeners to help make sure the orders are right and prevent mistakes.

Good teamwork also requires us to be ready to take a problem-solving attitude so we can fix mistakes if they do happen. You need to be willing to ask "why" if something does go wrong. It's not enough to blame someone else for a mistake because they gave the order and you were "just doing what you were told". You need to be able to keep your perspective and see what is really important, and see how to fix it, instead of just getting mad and protecting yourself from criticism.

The exercises in this program cover the elements in the problem-solving process as outlined in the *National Occupational Standards for Line Cooks* (Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism, Vancouver, B.C. 1996):

- Define problem
- Identify possible solutions
- Evaluate possible solutions
- Determine best solution
- Implement solution
- Follow up if necessary

The scenarios given for practice also provide opportunities to practice ways to deal with the likely causes of stress in the workplace, also listed in the *National Occupational Standards for Line Cooks* (Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism, Vancouver, B.C. 1996):

- Constant change
- Demands from customers, supervisors, and co-workers
- Staffing deficiencies, e.g. short-staffed
- Product shortages
- Equipment failure
- Work environment, e.g. heating, lighting, noise
- Conflict with co-workers

3. Sharing skills to build a smart organization

Put all this together and you have the way today's workplaces need to operate. Having everyone do his or her own small piece, yet having everyone aware of how their piece fits into the whole, is the way smart organizations and smart teams work. They use the skills of everyone around them, and their own skills, to get everything done and they stay aware of what everyone else is doing, so they can get everything done on time and done right.

The exercises in this program foster most of the skills needed to be professional, as outlined in the *National Occupational Standards for Line Cooks* (Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism, Vancouver, B.C. 1996):

- a. maintain positive attitude, e.g. be pleasant in stressful situation
- b. communicate effectively, e.g. speak clearly, listen carefully
- c. be a team player
- d.

- e. be: ...
1. co-operative
 2. dependable, e.g. work well without supervision, complete tasks on or before deadlines
 3. honest, e.g. take responsibility for your mistakes
 4. organized, e.g. be prepared for busy times, have stock on hand
 5. versatile, e.g. do other duties that may be requested, adapt to unexpected situations
 6. willing to learn, e.g. be open to suggestions that will help you do your job better

Meeting learners' needs

The practice exercises here are designed to build skills by giving learners realistic problems that gradually increase in difficulty. As the learners try out the problems, they also learn guiding questions to remind them to deal with everything important. These guiding questions become supports the learners can take with them into the workplace.

The exercises are based directly on scenarios likely to occur for cooks. You can adapt the exercises or add new scenarios based on your own experience. Your knowledge of how things actually play out on the job will give students the realistic feedback they need to be better prepared for unexpected situations or difficulties they might actually face.

As far as possible, the scenarios are set up to draw on skills taught in the Level I Cook Training Program. For example, problems may call for increasing or reducing recipe size, choosing menus, checking inventory and storing food products, being aware of nutrition, following house policies and safety procedures, managing stress, or exhibiting professionalism.

1. Starting where we are: acknowledging difficulties

Most of us find some job-success skills difficult to master, because we don't even know what we have to learn before we make a mistake by not doing it right. If we're lucky, we learn from our mistakes before we get fired. If we're not so lucky, we figure it out in time to do better in our next job. We learn by trial and error because we can, but that does not mean it's the best way to learn.

Learners who have experienced difficulty earlier in school or in their lives aren't the only ones who would appreciate help figuring out how to understand and meet a boss's expectations. We'd all like to be able to get it right without having to guess.

Learners who have had difficulty before need extra help to adapt to a team environment and to a problem-solving approach in general. They have had experiences that turn trial-and-error into trial-and-conviction. If you ask questions after everyone else has already "got it", you feel stupid and inadequate everyone else was smart enough to do it without extra help. Your confidence slips away. You don't want to be part of a team you would rather do things by yourself, not because it's easier but because you don't want to ask for help. You don't believe that what you do will work. When it doesn't work out and you're told how wrong you were, that's exactly what you expect.

If you carry that insecurity and lack of confidence into the workplace, you're setting yourself up to get fired. You don't check the instructions because you dare not ask. You do what you think you should do, knowing it might not be right. When that gets you told off, or fired for incompetence, you tell yourself you're so dumb you haven't a chance of holding a job.

In this program, students are encouraged to realize that everyone needs help, and that they can give help as well as get it. Teamwork makes everyone stronger.

2. Building a problem-solving attitude to build confidence

If you can learn to see yourself as a problem-solver, you realize that it's more than just okay to check your orders and ask for help - you learn that's how smart workers operate. You see how your skills, and your tasks, fit in as part of the team. You don't blame anyone else when things go wrong nor do you unfairly blame yourself! You're as ready as anyone else to participate in "how can we do things better around here" sessions after your shift, because you know that doing a good job isn't about living in terror of making mistakes. It's about thinking ahead to prevent problems, and looking back to learn from what you've done, and always keeping your eyes open to be ready to help others and improve yourself.

In this program, students learn to develop a problem-solving attitude by practicing skills that will help them feel more capable of dealing with new situations.

3. Developing and practicing teamwork skills

Teamwork does not come easily to everyone, so practice alone is not enough to help people become better team players. The skills of working in a team need to be broken down into recognizable tasks that can be practiced separately.

In this program, students learn how to bring their problem-solving attitude into teamwork, to help them learn to feel comfortable as part of a team. They learn how to divide up tasks fairly and carry them out promptly so that everyone benefits.

APPENDIX C

The Instructor's Role in Helping Students Be Successful Learners

The techniques you'll find in this program are the same ones any teacher can use to help any student learn.

Teaching Techniques:

1. Break the task down into manageable pieces

A problem solving attitude isn't just a tactic that we apply to the "oh, no!" stuff that interrupts our lives. All learning is really problem solving. How do you get a handle on something new? You break it down, start with one piece at a time, and begin to figure out how each piece fits together into the big picture. You'd do this whether you were learning how to do an oil change, or how to debone a chicken, or how to throw a baseball. That's problem solving a constant cycle of mentally preparing yourself, trying it out, and checking to see if you've got it right yet or if you need to figure it out a bit better.

When you help students to learn, you guide them through the same process. You help them break the task down into pieces they can manage. You help them get ready to try the new lesson. You show them what to do and watch them try, and you give them feedback to show them what they've done right and help them think about what they need to do better next time.

For example, if you are teaching students how to double a recipe, you may know this makes many students nervous. So you might start by helping them review what they know about multiplying, and doing some simple calculations to remind them they do know how to double quantities. Then you may demonstrate how to double a recipe, walk them through your calculations, and ask them to try it themselves. You'll check their work and discuss how they did the calculations, so they can see how to do it right the next time. As they get better, you'll congratulate them and move them on to more difficult calculations.

2. Show learners how to build their internal learning support system

By breaking the lesson into steps and stages, you help the students by building a scaffold that helps support them as they learn. If you then go on to help the students think about how they learn, then you are helping them learn to build their own scaffolding. Once they know how to help themselves learn, they have an essential skill to support them in learning any new task, in the classroom, or on a new job, or in their personal lives. This can make the difference between keeping a new job or losing it.

To help students build their own scaffolding, you introduce the questions they can ask themselves to help them understand how they work best.

For example, instead of just talking about how to multiply, you might also ask them how they learn new things in general. Do they prefer to see something demonstrated, hear it described, or touch it and try it themselves? What do they do to reassure themselves that it's ok to try? Can they help each other by sharing tips and tactics that have worked for them? You might get them to brainstorm in small groups, to design ways they can learn. You might get them to try the task together, so they can help each other. You might encourage them to talk together afterwards to go over what helped them most, what worked and what didn't, and how well they managed. Then they will remember the lesson for next time not just the lesson about doubling a recipe, but the lesson about taking control of their own learning.

As students learn to take control of their own learning, they begin to develop a problem-solving, "can-do" attitude. And as they work with other learners and watch them go through the same process, they become more comfortable working as teams whose job is to help and guide each other.

3. Use yourself as a role model for learners

If you are an experienced cook, you'll be able to give them feedback based on your own experience in the workplace. You can use the benefit of your years of experience to help them think about things they have not yet learned to notice. You can tell them how you made mistakes and learned from them, so they can see that nobody starts out perfect.

If you are a literacy instructor, you may not be able to provide the same direct workplace feedback, but you are nevertheless an excellent role model as a problem-solver. You can show the learners how you approach problems, and help them see that it is not necessary to have all the answers in advance. You can work with them to model questions they might ask their cooking instructor so they can get the information they need.

Giving students feedback

The exercises in this program do not have "right answers". That is the nature of problem-solving. There may be more than one way to make things work. There may be no really good way to solve a difficult problem, and you just have to settle for the "least bad" solution.

There are answer "guidelines" but no answer key. Instead, there is plenty of opportunity for discussion. You can use your own judgment on whether the learners are doing well or need more help. Step in at any stage to ask how it's going and to offer comments or suggestions. Ask students to share their answers with each other. The more you can discuss with your students what they are doing, and why, the more you help them learn to think about and explain their own problem-solving.

To make sure that you are not overwhelmed by constant checks on students' work, the exercises are set up so that learners can monitor their own progress. Sometimes you may simply need to initial a piece of paper to check that an activity has happened.

Each exercise is set up with one question for you to ask part way through or at the end. This question should help you judge whether the students have handled their task effectively, or not. Use your own judgement on what feedback to give them. When you ask a question, you are standing in for their future employer and judging them as an employer might. Give them whatever constructive feedback will help them see how their performance might be judged on the job. Each exercise has some suggestions on what you might look for.

Use your own judgment on whether learners are ready to move on to the next type of exercise or whether they need more practice. If they seem to have managed a task quickly and easily, you can move them on. If they need more practice, you can use every scenario that is listed, or create more of your own based on situations you've lived through. When they are learning to work as teams, you may want to mix and match teams to repeat the same exercises with different people. This will give them the experience of doing the same task with different classmates, which should show them how the challenges can arise from the people, not from the task.

Instructor marking guidelines

For all of these scenarios, the best help you can be is to cast your professional eye over what the students have said or done.

Is it realistic, based on what you know of the workplace?

If yes, tell the students why. If they have come up with something you think is particularly good, tell them what is particularly good about it.

If they have missed something, or gone in directions that would not please a demanding boss, suggest what else they should think about and ask them to try again.

Guiding Questions for team problem-solving

As you work with learners on exercises in this program, you will probably be able to tell when they are responding as capable cooks would. If they seem to be having trouble, you might find it helpful to suggest one or more of these questions to them. Depending on where you think they are having trouble, you can ask a question to help them focus on what they may have overlooked. These prompting questions will remind them to cover all the aspects they need to think about.

Activity: Stage	Observe	Focus	See possibilities	Value contribution
Preparing	What can you see or remember that might help?	What will be the toughest part of this?	What might happen that you should be ready for?	What would you like to do here?
Acting	What have you got to work with?	What's going to be most important for the customer?	What possibilities can you see?	What would work best for you here?
Reflecting	What happened when we did this?	Did you meet your expectations and the customer's?	What would you keep the same and what would you change if you have to do this again?	What message could you take away from this as a lesson for the future?

Annotated Adult Education Resources

Chang Barker, Kathryn. *A Program Evaluation Handbook for Workplace Literacy*. Ottawa: [National Literacy Secretariat](#), 1991.

This publication describes formal evaluation procedures in workplace literacy programs.. Throughout the publication there are questions to help the reader focus on what they are working to achieve. It contains a comprehensive overview on information gathering and analysis.

Debling, Graham and Behrman, Bev. *Employability Skills for British Columbia*. Sponsored by: Human Resources Development Canada, The British Columbia Labour Force Development Board and the British Columbia Institute of Technology, October 1996.

The first project in British Columbia that examines the employability skills small and medium businesses are looking for in the people they hire. 195 people were consulted from businesses that employed less than 100 people. Respondents chose their top 15 personal management skills from a list of 187 skills that were based on the Conference Board of Canada findings.

Folinsbee, S. and Steel, N. Guidelines for *Developing a Workplace Education Program for Practitioners*. Province of BC Ministry of Education, Skills and Training: Human Resources Development Canada and [National Literacy Secretariat](#), 1997.

This workbook is divided into workshop modules that range from understanding motivations for skills upgrading to marketing and promotion of workplace basic skills. Each module lists its objectives and contains thoughtful guidelines for suggested workshop lesson plans, including samples of all handouts used.

Gutteridge, Moira. *Constructive Critical Thinking*. Toronto: Harcourt & Brace Canada, 1995. This book provides a framework in which students can see how critical thinking helps them to explore issues that matter to them. It also offers sound advice on how to read more critically and links critical thinking to problem solving. The book uses a pattern of "see one, try one, apply one": for each new skill there is a worked-out example, a self test with an answer in the back, and then an exercise to apply that skill to a topic of the student's own choice.

Jurmo, P. and Folinsbee, S. *Collaborative Evaluation: A Handbook for Workplace Development Planners*. ABC Canada Literacy Foundation, 1994.

This handbook stresses the value of collaborative evaluation. It provides a very detailed step by step action plan for developing a workplace literacy evaluation, including specific facilitator and committee activities and effective questions to use in the evaluation process.

Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the first International Adult Literacy Survey.

Ottawa: Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1995.

This is a report on the main findings of the first international adult literacy survey which was a collaborative effort by seven governments including Canada and three intergovernmental organizations. The literacy skills of approximately 1,500 to 8,000 adults per country were tested in the fall of 1994. Chapters include: the importance of literacy, how to interpret the results, the distribution of literacy skills across countries, the relationship between literacy practices and levels and a summary of the key findings.

National Adult Literacy Database. www.nald.ca.

Nald connects with literacy organizations all over the country. The site includes information on special events, provincial and territorial organizations as well links to other literacy based web sites. It is well laid out and easy to use.

Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Human Resources Development Canada and the [National Literacy Secretariat](#), 1996.

The report "expands and extends the analysis of the Canadian data presented in the international report, including additional data on the distribution of literacy by region and language."

Taylor, Maurice. Editor ***Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape.*** Toronto: Culture Concepts Inc., 1997.

The twenty three chapters arranged in four parts are written by leading practioners from different walks of life and regions in Canada. They provide up-to-date information about the major issues in workplace literacy training problems, theories, policies, practices and institutions.

Watson, Wendy and McLean, Cathy. ***Critical Thinking in Workplace Literacy Programs: A Model for Curriculum Design.*** Province of British Columbia: Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour and the Centre for Curriculum & Professional Development, December 1993.

This book explores using problem based learning in Canadian workplace literacy programmes. It considers emerging trends in the studies of North American employers, surveys Canadian workplace literacy programmes, gives a model of supported learning with examples and provides a brief annotated bibliography of workplace/literacy problem solving curricula.

Waugh, Sue. ***Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills.*** Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat, 1993.

This document begins by defining workplace literacy and basic skills. It proves the importance of workplace literacy by citing statistics from "Survey of Literacy Skills used in Daily Activities". It clearly explains different approaches to skills upgrading and important steps in setting up a workplace literacy program.

Bibliography

Adult Basic Education in British Columbia Colleges 1999-2000: An Articulation Handbook.

Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Skills and Training and the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology, 1999.

Debling, Graham and Behrman, Bev. ***Employability Skills for British Columbia.*** Sponsored by: Human Resources Development Canada, The British Columbia Labour Force Development Board and the British Columbia Institute of Technology, October 1996.

Folinsbee, Sue; and Steel, Nancy. ***Literacy B.C.'s 1996 Summer Literacy Institute Final Report: Guidelines for Developing a Workplace Education Program for Practitioners.***

Province of British Columbia: Ministry of Education, Skills and Training; Human Resources Development Canada and [National Literacy Secretariat](#), March 1997. Fownes, Lynda. "Basic Skills At Work," Workshops on "Literacy, Economy and Society" Calgary, Alberta, September/November 1996.

Gisslen, Wayne. ***Professional Cooking.*** Third Edition. Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995.

Grieve, Vicki; and Neufeld, Elsie. ***Lifelines for Learning: Study Skills for Adults*** Modules 1- 4. Province of British Columbia: Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour and the Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development, 1995.

Gutteridge, Moira. ***Constructive Critical Thinking.*** Toronto: Harcourt & Brace Canada, 1995. This book provides a framework in which students can see how critical thinking helps them to explore issues that matter to them. It also offers sound advice on how to read more critically and links critical thinking to problem solving. The book uses a pattern of "see one, try one, apply one": for each new skill there is a worked-out example, a self test with an answer in the back, and then an exercise to apply that skill to a topic of the student's own choice.

Human Resources Development Canada. ***Helping You Better Understand the World of Work: Essential Skills Now on the Internet!***. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1998.

Jurmo, Paul and Folinsbee, Sue. ***Collaborative Evaluation: A Handbook for Workplace Development Planners.*** Don Mills, Ontario: ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation, 1994.

Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the first International Adult Literacy Survey.

Ottawa: Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1995.

Mair, Debra L. "The Development of Occupational Essential Skills Profiles." ***Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape.*** Maurice Taylor Editor. Toronto: Culture Concepts Inc., 1997.

National Adult Literacy Database <http://www.nald.ca>

Occupational Analyses Series "Cook." Ottawa: Standards, Planning and Analysis and Human Resources Partnerships Directorate, 1997.

Page, James E. "Preface." *Consultation on Workplace Literacy June 11-12, 1997 A Report*. Ottawa: [The National Literacy Secretariat](#).

Professional Cook Learning Guide Lines A-K Level 1. Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development, 1994. reprint ed., Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, 1997.

Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Human Resources Development Canada and the [The National Literacy Secretariat](#), 1996.

Steel, Nancy; Johnston, Wendy; Folinsbee, Sue; and Belfiore, Mary Ellen. "Towards a Framework of Good Practice." *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*. Toronto: Culture Concepts Inc., 1997.

Taylor, Maurice C.; Lewe, Glenda R.; and Draper, James E. ed. *Basic Skills for the Workplace*. Toronto: Culture Concepts, 1991.

Taylor, Maurice. *Test Review: Workplace Assessment Tools*. Ottawa: Partnerships in Learning [The National Literacy Secretariat](#), April 1997.

Taylor, Maurice. "Introduction." *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*. Toronto: Culture Concepts Inc., 1997.

Watson, Wendy and McLean, Cathy. *Critical Thinking in Workplace Literacy Programs: A Model for Curriculum Design*. Province of British Columbia: Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour and the Centre for Curriculum & Professional Development, December 1993.

Watson, Wendy and McLean, Cathy. *ABE Communications* Modules 1-5. Province of British Columbia: Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour and the Centre for Curriculum & Professional Development, revised ed., 1995.

Waugh, Sue. *An Organizational Approach to Workplace Basic Skills: A Guidebook for Practitioners*. Ottawa: Ottawa YM\YWCA, 1992.