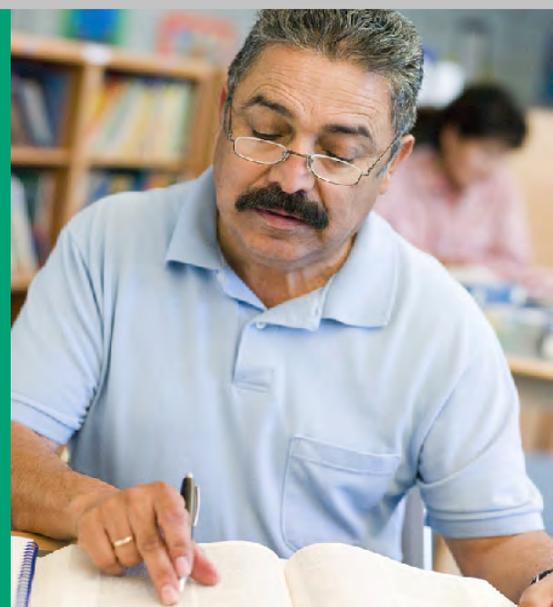


Workbook One

1

Essential Skills to Identify the Job Searcher





This workbook was created by Literacy Link South Central. We are a regional network in Ontario that provides support to literacy programs. We are a partner in the Employment Ontario system. This series of workbooks is the result of a project called, “Connecting Literacy and Employment through Essential Skills.” These resources have been developed for people who want to look for employment while strengthening their Essential Skills.

Thank you to our project partners for their help in creating these resources. Our partners for this project include:

- Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford, Workforce Planning and Development Board
- Goodwill Ontario Great Lakes
- Literacy London Inc.
- London Employment Help Centre
- Pathways Skill Development & Placement Centre

A special thanks to the employment agencies, literacy programs, employers and Essential Skills experts who participated in this project. Their feedback was valuable in the development of this workbook series.

Canada 

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Content developed by Karen Farrar

Design by Tracy Buchkowsky

These workbooks can be downloaded free of charge at www.llsc.on.ca. Organizations are encouraged to copy these materials; however, reproducing these materials for a profit is prohibited. All website links were accurate at the time of printing – May 2011.

Read this Part First

This workbook is for you if:

- You're looking for work.
- You have access to a computer with Internet.
- You feel comfortable using a computer and the Internet and you would like to practise and improve these skills.
- You want to build your Essential Skills.

This workbook is one in a series of seven titles:

1. **Essential Skills to Identify the Job Searcher**
2. Essential Skills to Identify the Job
3. Essential Skills to Research Your Occupation
4. Essential Skills to Search for Jobs
5. Essential Skills to Market Yourself with a Resume and Cover Letter
6. Essential Skills to Market Yourself at the Interview
7. Essential Skills to Maintain Employability

What are Essential Skills? Why are they important to you, the job seeker?

Essential Skills are the skills you need for work, learning and life. Knowing your Essential Skills helps you to tell employers what you can do for them. It shows people that you have the skills to learn, that you adapt to change and that you can work well with others. A good employee has strong Essential Skills. When you practise and improve your Essential Skills, you increase your chances of finding a job.

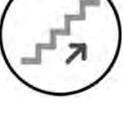
Why are these workbooks unique?

- These workbooks combine job search activities and Essential Skills resources. You can look for a job and improve your Essential Skills – at the same time.
- You can photocopy or download the copies you need – they're free!
- The workbooks are self-paced. You can take as much time as you need and complete as many workbooks as you need.

How you will use Essential Skills for job search

You will find that you use your Essential Skills for all of the job search activities in these workbooks. When you begin to read the content, you will notice that activities requiring Essential Skills are identified with icons and tips. The icons tell you which Essential Skills you will be using. The tips tell you how you will use the Essential Skill for a specific activity.

Essential Skills Icon	What It Means
	Reading: Understanding materials written in sentences or paragraphs Example: Read a case study about job search.
	Using documents: Using and understanding labels, graphs, signs and other similar materials Example: Fill in a chart of job search contact information.
	Numeracy: Using and understanding numbers Example: Budget your monthly expenses.
	Writing: Writing text or typing on a computer Example: Write a thank you note after an interview.
	Oral communication: Using speech to share thoughts and information Example: Practise answering interview questions with others.

Essential Skills Icon	What It Means
	<p>Working with others: Interacting with others to complete tasks</p> <p>Example: Help to improve one another’s interview skills.</p>
	<p>Thinking: Reviewing information to make decisions</p> <p>Example: Analyze how you spend your time during your job search.</p>
	<p>Computer use: Using computers and other technical tools</p> <p>Example: Use the Internet for research.</p>
	<p>Continuous learning: Participating in an ongoing process of gaining skills and knowledge</p> <p>Example: Learn to maintain a positive attitude during job search.</p>

Computer Skills

As you work through the workbooks you will be practising your computer skills. You must have some basic computer skills in order to complete many of the workbook activities.

Can you do the following?

- **Use a mouse.** Can you open links by clicking on them? Can you double click on files?
- **Use a keyboard.** Can you type? Can you type in a web address? Do you know how to use command keys like Shift and Control?
- **Search the Internet.** Can you use a search engine like Google or Internet Explorer? Can you use key words to find a specific topic?
- **Search a website.** Can you use the menus, links and tabs to find your way on a website?
- **Watch an online video.** Can you open, play and pause a video? Can you adjust the sound?

If you are unable to perform these computer functions, you may wish to take some basic computer training before you use the workbooks.



Tips for making the workbooks work for you

These workbooks have been designed for job seekers who want to look for work and improve their Essential Skills.

Here are some tips to help you get the most out of each workbook.

- ✓ Use the Essential Skills Checklist before and after you complete each workbook to see how your Essential Skills improve.
- ✓ Read the Job Search Terms so that you are familiar with the terms used in each workbook.
- ✓ For best results, work through all the workbooks. They follow the steps you'll take when looking for a job. But if you don't need the information in every workbook, you can just choose the ones with the content that is right for you.
- ✓ Try to work through the whole workbook and not just sections. This will increase your understanding of the content and help you practise your Essential Skills.
- ✓ These workbooks have been designed for clients in both employment and literacy agencies. If you get stuck, ask for help.
- ✓ As much as possible, work with your colleagues (other jobs searchers in your program). You will practise your Essential Skills when you share information and ideas.
- ✓ Remember that these are your workbooks. This means that you can write in them, underline, highlight, make notes - anything that helps you to learn and get ready for work.

Improving your Essential Skills increases your chances of finding work. Good luck with your job search!



Workbook One

If you don't know your past, you don't know your future. (Bob Marley, Tomorrow People)

One of the most important and overlooked steps to a successful job search is the first one.

Before you open a newspaper and check the ads...

Before you turn on the computer to write your resume...

Before you activate your personal network...

What should you do?

Your most important job search tool is a **self-inventory**, which gives you a clear understanding of your interests, your strengths and your skills. When you have completed this self-inventory, you will have a much clearer picture of what you are able to offer an employer and what kind of employment will best suit you.



In this workbook you will:

- Record your work history
- Review workplace tasks, activities, responsibilities and situations
- Review home, school and community tasks, activities, responsibilities and situations
- Identify your strengths
- Discover your personal list of transferable skills
- Practise your Essential Skills

When you have completed these activities you will have a self-inventory to aid you in your job search. The self-inventory is a tool that you can use as you draft your resume and covering letter, and as you prepare for interviews. The more detailed your self-inventory, the more material you will have to draw from for your job search.

Using Your Essential Skills for a Job Search

One of the benefits of using this workbook series is that as you prepare for employment, you also practise your Essential Skills. Essential Skills are the skills that help you to carry out life and work tasks, including your job search. Practising and improving your Essential Skills will improve your job search techniques and materials. Improved Essential Skills will increase your chances of finding work that you want. The Essential Skills that you use in your job search are often the same ones that you will use on the job.

In Workbook One you will use the following Essential Skills:

- Reading
- Document Use
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Thinking
- Computer Use
- Continuous Learning



You can evaluate your confidence and progress in using these skills by assessing yourself before and after you complete this workbook. Your self-assessment can show you the skills you feel confident in using and the skills you need to practise more. This is important information for your job search and your success as an employee.

1. Take a few moments to complete the self-assessment on page 11 before you begin the workbook activities. Assess your Essential Skills in the **Before** column.
2. As you work through the activities, notice the icons and tips that help you to focus on particular Essential Skills.
3. When you have completed the workbook, return to the Essential Skills Checklist. You will be able to measure your improved job search abilities using Essential Skills by putting check marks in the **After** column.

Job Search Terms

Term	Definition
Colleague	This is a fellow job seeker.
Job Specific Skills	These are technical or special skills that are required for a particular job. For example, a carpenter needs to know how to use a band saw.
Personal Network	This is any group of people that help you in your job search. They can be acquaintances, family members, friends or colleagues. They can help in many different ways. For example, a friend may let you know when there is an opening at her workplace. An uncle may pass along your business card to an employer.
Responsibilities	These are job tasks that others depend on you to do.
Self-inventory	This is a list of your unique interests, skills and strengths.
Tasks	These are activities that you perform on the job, at home or in the community.
Transferable Skills	These are skills that are required in many different jobs and activities. You can take these skills with you and use them in another job. For example, knowing how to drive is a transferable skill because many jobs and activities require you to have a drivers license.

Essential Skills Checklist



Use this Essential Skills Checklist to rate your increased confidence in using Essential Skills. Before you start the activities in this workbook, fill in the **Before** column. When you have completed the workbook, fill in the **After** column. Have your Essential Skills improved? Knowing what you do well can be important information to share when applying for jobs. Knowing what you still need to work on will help you prepare for future job search success.

Using Essential Skills for Job Search	I'm not sure if I can do this.		I can't do this yet.		I can do this with help.		I can do this.	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Using Reading Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read and interpret information in case studies related to job search 								
Using Document Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record my work history in a table (Activity 1) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record tasks, responsibilities and situations from the workplace or home and community (Activity 2) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a document to record my interest level in a task, responsibility or situation (Activity 3) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a chart to record lists of personal strengths, opportunities, back-up options and situations to avoid (Activity 4) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a table to record skills demonstrated in work and life activities (Activity 6) 								

Using Essential Skills for Job Search	I'm not sure if I can do this.		I can't do this yet.		I can do this with help.		I can do this.	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Using Writing Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record tasks, responsibilities and situations to describe work experience (Activity 2) 								
Using Oral Communication I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present and discuss job search information (Activity 5) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate one to one and ask for detailed information (Activity 8) 								
Using Thinking Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide if a job task, responsibility or situation is of interest to me (Activity 3) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide if an area of interest is also a strength (Activity 4) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide which skills to use for certain activities (Activity 6) 								
Using Computer Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate a website and do an online quiz (Activity 5) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do an Internet search using key words (Activity 7) 								
Using Continuous Learning Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn from studying past experiences and apply lessons learned to new situations (Activity 4) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try new ways of doing things by creating a skills list from my strengths and interests (Activity 6) 								

Case Study One



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read and interpret information in case studies related to job search

Rita worked at Vesper Manufacturing for many years. She was a good employee and had won a number of safety and production awards in her time at Vesper. Her performance reviews were always excellent, so it never occurred to Rita that she might lose her job.

When the first wave of layoffs came, Rita was one of the fortunate ones who kept her job. Rita was sad for her friend and colleague, Merle, who was laid off, but Rita continued to work at Vesper with production figures that were better than ever.

Then one day (it seemed out of the blue to Rita) Vesper Manufacturing announced its permanent closure in Canada. A number of employees who were close to retirement age were happy to take their severance packages and pensions. But Rita was in her early forties. She had a mortgage, a car and credit payments, and two children. Rita knew that she needed another job.

Rita had her resume professionally written. She sent it off to dozens of employers both locally and online. She asked friends and family to look out for a job for her. "Any luck?" her friend Merle asked her one day over coffee.

"I've been called for two interviews," said Rita. "The first was with a telemarketing company. I was offered the job but turned it down. I can't afford to work for that pay!"

What was the second one?" asked Merle.

"It was a security company. They interviewed me, but I didn't get the job," said Rita.

"Just as well. I can't see you as a security guard," Merle laughed.

Case study reflection

Did Rita's job search work? Why or why not?

What do you think she could have done to job search more effectively?

Your Self-Inventory Part One: Interests

What is wrong with Rita's job search method? She hasn't taken the time to discover what it is that she really wants to do next. Rita has wasted time and effort applying for jobs that she doesn't really want. She has not taken the time to discover her interests, strengths and skills.

Imagine deciding that you need groceries and then going to the grocery store. Once there you walk up and down the aisles grabbing anything and everything until your cart is full.

Sounds silly, right?

Most people prepare ahead by thinking about what they need, and they often write out a grocery list. They take stock of what they have on hand, what they need and what they want. Even if they do not make a list, they have some idea of the groceries that they need from week to week.

A job search is more important than a trip to the grocery store, yet it's surprising how few people **take stock** of themselves before they begin the job search process. When you record your work history, you begin to take stock of the experience you already have to help with your job search.

Activity One: Record Your Work History



Essential Skills Tip: Document Use

- Record your work history in a document



To begin your self-inventory, take time to review your job history. If you have never worked outside the home, don't worry. These activities will still work for you. If you are just out of school, these activities will work for you too. Just skip the Work History Record and move on to Activity Two.

Record the jobs you have had, beginning with your most recent work.

Work History Record		
Job Title	Employer	Date

Activity Two: Record Tasks, Responsibilities and Situations



Essential Skills Tip: Document Use, Writing

- Record tasks, responsibilities and situations from work or home and community in a chart

In this activity you will:

- Record tasks, responsibilities and situations from the workplace in the first chart on page 19.
- Record tasks, responsibilities and situations from home, school and community in the chart on page 21.

It will probably take you quite a bit of time and effort to fill in the charts, but the work is worth it. The more detail you develop here, the better your self-inventory and the clearer the picture will be for you and your future employment.

(You may need to photocopy several pages of the chart.)



Filling in the Workplace Chart

Think about your day-to-day experience in your last job. In the following Workplace Chart record your work tasks, responsibilities and situations.

- Tasks: Things you did
- Responsibilities: Things others depended on you to do and things you were in charge of
- Situations: Typical work scenarios and things that happened that you couldn't predict

Start with your most recent job and move backwards from there to your earliest work. You may need to photocopy several pages of the chart. Refer to your **Work History Record** from Activity One.

Examples of Tasks, Responsibilities and Situations in the Workplace

- Tasks: maintaining machinery, balancing cash float, dealing with customers, stocking shelves
- Responsibilities: arriving on time for shift, closing store, scheduling staff, attending union meetings
- Situations: trouble-shooting machinery breakdowns, handling customer complaints, interacting with co-workers

Before you complete your Workplace Chart, read the next part of the case study. See how Rita began filling in her Workplace Chart.

Case Study #1 - continued

After a few more frustrating weeks of job search, Rita decided that she needed to take a different approach. She filled in a **Workplace Chart** so that she could see her tasks, responsibilities and situations from her old job. Because she had only ever worked at Vesper Manufacturing, Rita decided that she would also fill in a **Home, School and Community Chart**. After Rita completed her charts, she knew more about the tasks, responsibilities and situations she was involved in at work, at home and in the community. She was surprised to see how much she actually did at work and at home and in the community.

Here are some examples of what Rita included in her charts.

Rita's Workplace Chart - Vesper Manufacturing					
Task, Responsibility, or Situation	Most Interesting		Least Interesting		
Work station teamwork	1	2	3	4	5
Checking cartons	1	2	3	4	5
Assembling	1	2	3	4	5
Attend and participate in safety meetings	1	2	3	4	5
Shift work	1	2	3	4	5

Rita's Home, School and Community Chart					
Task, Responsibility, or Situation	Most Interesting		Least Interesting		
Manage household finances	1	2	3	4	5
Shop for groceries	1	2	3	4	5
Cook	1	2	3	4	5
Drive kids to sports and activities	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteer for the Canadian Cancer Society	1	2	3	4	5



Your Workplace Chart _____

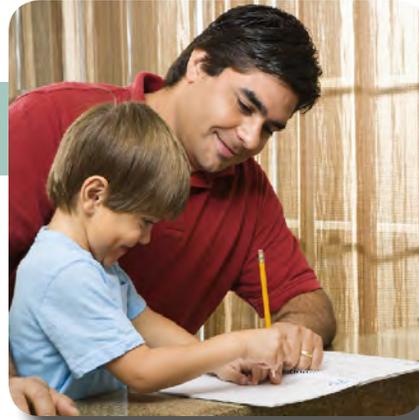
Task, Responsibility, or Situation		Most Interesting					Least Interesting				
1		1	2	3	4	5					
2		1	2	3	4	5					
3		1	2	3	4	5					
4		1	2	3	4	5					
5		1	2	3	4	5					
6		1	2	3	4	5					
7		1	2	3	4	5					
8		1	2	3	4	5					
9		1	2	3	4	5					
10		1	2	3	4	5					
11		1	2	3	4	5					
12		1	2	3	4	5					

Filling in the Home, School and Community Chart

Think about your day-to-day experience at home, school and in your community. Record your tasks, responsibilities and situations in the following chart. You may need to photocopy several pages of the chart.

Examples of Tasks, Responsibilities and Situations at Home, at School and in the Community

- Tasks: preparing meals, making home repairs, completing math assignments
- Responsibilities: parenting, managing family finances, acting as a student council member, coaching a soccer team
- Situations: attending co-op meetings, dealing with emergencies, dealing with conflict



Your Home, School and Community Chart

Task, Responsibility, or Situation		Most Interesting			Least Interesting	
1		1	2	3	4	5
2		1	2	3	4	5
3		1	2	3	4	5
4		1	2	3	4	5
5		1	2	3	4	5
6		1	2	3	4	5
7		1	2	3	4	5
8		1	2	3	4	5
9		1	2	3	4	5
10		1	2	3	4	5
11		1	2	3	4	5
12		1	2	3	4	5

Activity Three: Analyze Your Charts to Discover Your Interests



Essential Skills Tip: Thinking (Decision Making), Document Use

- Decide if a job task, responsibility or situation is of interest to you
- Use a document to record your level of interest

You should now have at least one page listing the tasks, responsibilities and situations from your employment history and/or your experience at home, school or in the community.

- A.** Use the second column of your chart to circle the number that best represents your experience.

If you found the task, responsibility or situation --

- very interesting, circle or highlight 1
- somewhat interesting, circle or highlight 2
- neither interesting nor uninteresting, circle or highlight 3,
- somewhat uninteresting, circle or highlight 4,
- very uninteresting, circle or highlight 5

- B.** Use a highlighter to analyze your charts.

If you have lots of 1's (very interesting), then highlight these tasks, situations and responsibilities.

If you do not have many 1's (fewer than 10), then highlight your top ten tasks, activities and situations. You will highlight all of your 1's, your 2's and possibly some 3's.

- C.** When you have completed this activity, your chart will clearly show areas of greatest interest at work and/or home, at school and in the community.

Look at the examples of Rita's charts on the next page. Notice that she has circled the numbers in the right-hand column. She has highlighted the tasks, responsibilities and situations she finds most interesting.

Rita's Workplace Chart – Vesper Manufacturing					
Task, Responsibility, or Situation	Most Interesting		Least Interesting		
Work station teamwork	①	2	3	4	5
Checking cartons	1	2	③	4	5
Assembling	1	②	3	4	5
Attend and participate in safety meetings	①	2	3	4	5
Shift work	1	2	3	4	⑤

Rita's Home, School and Community Chart					
Task, Responsibility, or Situation	Most Interesting		Least Interesting		
Manage household finances	①	2	3	4	5
Grocery shopping	1	2	3	④	5
Cooking	1	2	③	4	5
Drive kids to sports and activities	1	2	3	4	⑤
Volunteer for the Canadian Cancer Society	①	2	3	4	5

Activity Four: Identify Your Strengths and Opportunities



Essential Skills Tip: Document Use, Thinking (Decision Making), Continuous Learning

- Use a chart to record lists of personal strengths, opportunities, back-up options and situations to avoid
- Decide if an area of interest is also a strength
- Learn from studying past experiences and apply lessons learned to new situations

Now you have a good idea of the tasks, responsibilities and situations that you are most or least interested in. The next step is to analyze your strengths in these areas. Often, when you really enjoy an activity you are good at it as well. But this isn't always the case. Sometimes, you can dislike an activity like cooking but actually be quite good at it. The reverse is also true: you may love an activity like swimming without being a very good swimmer.

In order to better prepare for your job search you will want to know the tasks, responsibilities and situations that interest you **and** you are good at.

1. Use the following chart or create a larger version if you need more space.
2. Record your tasks, responsibilities and situations in the appropriate boxes. Use the charts from Activity Two to help you fill in the boxes.
3. When you are finished, this chart will give you a picture of your strengths, opportunities, back-up options and areas to avoid.



Strengths and Opportunities

Tasks, responsibilities and situations that interest you **and** you are good at. These are your **Strengths**.

Tasks, responsibilities and situations you are good at **but** not interested in. These are your **Back-up Options**.

Tasks, responsibilities and situations that interest you **but** you are not good at. These are **Opportunities**.

Tasks, responsibilities and situations that do not interest you **and** you are not good at. These you should **Avoid**.

Strengths

The top left square of the chart represents your strengths. Not only are you interested in these tasks, situations and responsibilities, you are good at them too. Hopefully, your future employment will include as many of these areas of interest as possible.



Write down some ideas about jobs where you think you can use your strengths:

Opportunities

The lower left square represents interests in which you are less confident of your abilities. These interests may provide you with opportunities. Is there anything in this quadrant that you feel you should learn more about? Is training available or could you improve your skills with practice?

Write down some ideas about the kind of training or education you might need for these opportunities:

Backup Options

The top right square represents those areas in which you do well but have little or no interest. These are tasks, activities situations and responsibilities that you may not want to choose for your future employment. Nonetheless, they can provide you with a backup plan. For example, you might choose short-term employment where these tasks, situations and responsibilities are common.

Write down some ideas about a backup plan or short-term employment opportunities that you might consider:

Avoid

Finally, the bottom right square represents those tasks, activities situations and responsibilities that you dislike and do not do well. As much as possible, you will want to avoid these in your future employment.

Make a note here of some jobs that you would like to avoid in your future:

Case Study One – Conclusion

After Rita discovered her strengths and opportunities, she felt that she was more prepared to conduct a job search. She had a better idea of the kinds of jobs she would be interested in. More important, she had a clearer idea of the strengths that she could offer her future employers.

Activity Five: Confirm Your Results



Essential Skills Tip: Computer Use, Oral Communication

- Locate a website and do an online quiz
- Present and discuss job search information

Some job search websites provide tests and quizzes that can help you with your personal inventory. They cannot replace the kind of inventory that you have just completed; after all, you are the expert on your personal work and life experience! Still, quizzes can be fun and useful to confirm your results.

Go to the Job Bank at www.jobsetc.gc.ca/eng/ and click on the Career Navigator link and try the Abilities Quiz.

OR

1. Type **Service Canada** into your search engine
2. Click **English**
3. Click **Finding a job**
4. Click **Job Bank**
5. Click **Career Navigator**

Service Canada Canada

Job Bank
www.jobbank.gc.ca

Français Home Contact Us Help Search canada.gc.ca

Job Seekers / Workers

Training and Careers

Training / Learning
Career Exploration
Workers
Service Locations
Information for :
Aboriginal Persons
Newcomers and non-Canadians
Persons with Disabilities
Youth

Frequently Asked Questions

Employment Standards & Regulations

HR for Employers

Training, Career and Worker Information

Training / Learning
Explore your training options.

Career Exploration
Identify and research your career opportunities.

Workers
Discover your rights and benefits.

Our Tools

Career Navigator
Complete a quiz and find:
Career options... Job descriptions with hourly wages... Available jobs... Occupation outlooks ...

Blueprint for Life/Work
Discover the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to effectively design and manage your life, work and career.

Related Links

About Us
Other Job Sites
Government Jobs
Working in Canada
Apply for EI
Labour Market Information
Labour / Employment Standards

What if...?

>I'm on Employment Insurance
>I'm recently out of work
>I may be laid off soon
>I want to return to the work force
>I want to return to school
>I'm an older worker

Features

I Want to gain experience
FEDERAL STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

Assess your abilities using the Career Navigator quiz. Use the scale of 'very easy to very difficult' to assess your ability for each category. You will get a list of occupations to explore that matches your abilities profile. There are 39 questions to complete. It will probably take you 15 to 20 minutes to complete the quiz.

Record your top three abilities here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Your top three abilities are likely to be similar to the strengths you discovered in Activity Four. The website www.mazemaster.on.ca/ also provides a good self-assessment tool. Click on **Job Seeker** and then click on **Self-Assessment**. You will need to create an account on this website to complete the self-assessment. Click on the 'Create' button at the bottom of the page.

Discuss the results of your self-inventory with a colleague who is also job searching. Compare his or her inventory with yours and notice the similarities and differences.

Suggested Questions

1. What are your top interests?
2. What are your strengths?
3. What are opportunities for you?
4. What is your back-up plan?
5. What are you going to avoid in your next job?
6. Did you do the quiz? What are your top three abilities?



Your Self-Inventory Part Two: Skills

A self-inventory is not complete without a skills list. So far, you have discovered your interests and strengths. This is valuable information for you because it will help you to focus on areas of employment where you are most likely to succeed. Now it is time to identify your skills. Knowing your skills is vital to your successful job search.

- ✓ Skills are the products that you are marketing to the employer.
- ✓ Skills provide a common language for you and the employer.
- ✓ Skills show what you, uniquely, can do for the employer.
- ✓ Skills show your expertise and value to the employer.
- ✓ Skills show that you are qualified for the job.

Discovering your strengths and interests is an important step in the job search process. But your research is incomplete without knowing the skills you possess.

*Identify
Your skills!*



Case Study Two



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read and interpret information in case studies related to job search

Rita's friend Merle was laid off before Rita. Merle didn't send out resumes right away. Instead, she decided to discover what she really wanted to do. Merle did some online personality tests that told her that she was creative and artistic and better at working with things than working with people. When Merle analyzed her favourite tasks, responsibilities and situations, she noticed that many of them were also very creative. For example, her favourite tasks at home are decorating birthday cakes for her children and re-organizing the furniture. Her responsibilities and situations also suggested that she likes to work with her hands. Merle became quite excited at her quiz results and thought that she might be heading for a new career as an interior decorator.

Merle spoke to a career counsellor about her quiz results. The counsellor suggested that they research the top skills for an interior decorator.

Merle was unhappy to learn that she needed to be able to work and communicate well with others to be an interior decorator. She also needed good money math skills to be able to estimate the cost of labour and materials. Even though Merle's interests were very creative, she lacked some important skills for work in the home decorating field.

Do you have any ideas or suggestions for Merle?

Merle has learned about the importance of skills during her job search. She needs to know her strengths, interests and skills in order to improve her job search.

Skills: The Secret to Success

Skills are the products that you are marketing to the employer. Employers are less concerned about your strengths and interests than your skills for their workplace. Of course employers are pleased when you are interested in your work, but your skills are what will get you hired.

Skills provide a common language for you and the employer. How can you explain a task or activity that your future employer is unfamiliar with? The easiest and clearest way is to talk about skills. When you talk about your skills you are using action words or verbs. So a hair stylist who wants a job as a welder doesn't need to talk about perm rods. She can talk about working well with her hands, as well as being detail focussed and accustomed to standing in one place for long hours. These are all valuable skills for both stylists and welders.

Skills show what you, uniquely, can do for the employer. Skills are like fingerprints: no two people's are exactly the same. Marketing your skills gives you the opportunity to tell the employer that you have the skills uniquely suited to the job.

Skills show your expertise and value to the employer. Employers may like you personally and feel that you will fit in well with their organization. But if you don't have the skills they are looking for, you won't be hired. You will be hired based on the expertise and value you bring to the job.

Skills show that you are qualified for the job. Employers need to know that you are qualified for the job. The best way to show your qualifications is to highlight the skills you have that are needed for the job you're applying for.



Most jobs require two types of skills: **job specific** and **transferable**. If you have had technical jobs, you may think that the only skills you have are very specific to the kind of work you have already done. However, you will see that even very technical skills can often be transferred. The key is to analyze the skill and discover its transferable parts.

Having a good grasp of your own skills is critical in the early stages of a job or career search. If you're seeking employment, employers hire you primarily for your skills.

12 Steps to a New Career, p 39, Carl J. Wellenstein, Career Press, 2009

Transferable Skills

Many of the skills you use at work, at school, at home and in the community are **transferable skills**. These are skills that you can take with you when you leave one job and seek another. Transferable skills are among the most valuable skills you possess. For example, if you have learned to work with cash you will be able to take this skill with you to your next job.



Activity Six: Discovering Your Personal List of Transferable Skills



Essential Skills Tip: Document Use, Thinking (Decision Making), Continuous Learning

- Use a document to record skills demonstrated in work and life activities
- Decide which skills to use for certain activities
- Try new ways of doing things by creating a skills list from your strengths and interests

Because skills are so important to the employer, it is vital that you have a clear idea of what your skills are. There are several ways to develop your list.

Review the **Strengths and Opportunities Chart** that you completed on page 25.

For each strength that you listed, try and think of the associated skills.

For example, if you coached your daughter's soccer team, what skills did you use?

- Oral Communication – talking to parents
- Scheduling – organizing practices
- Document Use – filling in forms
- Organization – keeping track of players, uniforms, balls

These are just a few of the skills a community coach needs, and they are all transferable to the workplace!

When you review your list, stick with skills instead of traits or talents. For example, you might be a very popular soccer coach. Popularity is a character trait. Ask yourself questions like, What does popularity look like in action? Which actions help define my popularity? Your skills should be action words.

I am a popular soccer coach.

What does that look like? Which actions help define my popularity?

- Parents appreciate that I am **organized**.
- I **motivate** and **encourage** the players.
- I have many years **coaching experience**.

Once you have completed your list, look for skills that occur again and again. These are the skills that you will feature in your resume, cover letter, and interviews.



You can read more about resumes, cover letters and interviews in **Workbooks Five and Six**.

If you have a hard time thinking of skills, you can check out a website that lists transferable skills. Quintcareers.com has a good list of skills at:

www.quintcareers.com/transferable_skills_set.html.

You can also search “transferable skills” online.

My Skills	
Task, Responsibility, or Situation	Skills Used

Activity Seven: Search Transferable Skills Online



Essential Skills Tip: Computer Use

- Do an Internet search using key words

Try entering “Transferable Skills” into your search engine. Investigate a few of the websites that are listed. You will notice that there are hundreds of transferable skills listed! If you want help with your own list of transferable skills, go to www.nextsteps.org/career/transfer.html where you will find an transferable skills checklist.

The screenshot shows the website nextSteps.org. The page is titled "Career Planning" and "Skills". It explains that skills are abilities gained by practice or knowledge, while talent refers to natural abilities. It offers a "Transferable Skills Checklist" and provides four steps for how to use it: 1. Type in your name and click the update button. 2. Go through the list below and choose the skills you possess by clicking on "yes" in the drop-down menu beside each choice. 3. Now, go through the list again and choose your Top 5 skills from those you chose in Step 2. 4. Click the "proceed" button and you will receive a list of your choices which you can print out for your records. The page also includes a navigation menu on the left with options like Career Questions, Career Profiles, Finder, Job Boards, News, Contact, Mailing List, and Help. A sidebar on the right lists various career planning resources such as Self Evaluation, Career Exploration, Choosing a Career, Education & Training, Job Search, Résumé, Cover Letters, Job Search, Interviews, and Career Maintenance.

Activity Eight: Talk to Others about My Skills



Essential Skills Tip: Oral Communication

- Communicate one to one and ask for detailed information

If you are feeling stuck with your skills list, try asking others for their thoughts about your strengths and skills. Colleagues, former employers, friends, and relatives may surprise you or cause you to think about other skills that you hadn't considered.

Here are some questions you might ask:

Colleagues and former employers:

1. What would you say were my top five skills at work?

2. How did these make me a better employee?

Friends and relatives:

1. What do you think are my best skills?

2. What do you think are my strengths?

Let's see how Merle has handled her lack of skills for interior decorating.

Case Study Two – Conclusion

Merle began to work on her skills inventory when she realized that knowing her strengths and interests wasn't enough. She soon discovered that she had very strong manual dexterity skills. Her numeracy skills were a little rusty because she did not use them very often. She also learned that she had strong computer skills. Merle decided that she had many skills and interests in other areas and that getting a job as an interior decorator might not be the best option for her. She decided that she would continue to enjoy decorating cakes and rearranging the furniture as leisure activities. For employment, she would research jobs that made the most of her skills.



Essential Skills—Your Most Important Transferable Skills

You have probably come up with a list of many skills. Now you may be wondering which ones employers value more than others. That depends on the job, of course. Yet there is one set of skills that all employers look for and expect their employees to have. These are so common from job to job that they are known as the **Essential Skills**. Essential Skills are the foundational skills for work, learning and life. They are the basis of many of the skills you need for work.

Essential Skills

- Reading
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Working with Others
- Thinking
- Computer Use
- Continuous Learning



It is difficult to imagine any job that does not require you to use several of these Essential Skills. Using these Essential Skills in your job search allows you to practise skills you will need for work.

Conclusion

When you have completed this workbook, you will have several documents to use as reference tools in your future job search. You may wish to keep them in your job search portfolio, which you will learn more about in Workbook Seven.

Document	Suggested Purposes
Work History Record	For writing your resume or preparing for an interview
Workplace Chart of Tasks, Responsibilities and Situations	For highlighting important activities in your resume, cover letter or an interview
Home, School and Community Chart of Tasks, Responsibilities and Situations	For highlighting important activities in your resume, cover letter or an interview
Strengths and Interests Chart	For keeping you focused on the types of tasks, responsibilities and situations you seek in your next job Information for your network to alert them to the kind of work you are looking for
Skills Inventory	List of skills to refer to for your resume or an interview



Remember to Check Your Skills

Take time to return to page 11 and fill in the Essential Skills Checklist.

This checklist can help you keep track of the Essential Skills you use well and those that you have improved. It can also help you to highlight those skills that need more work and practice.

Essential Skills for Job Search Success

Workbook titles in this series include:

1. **Essential Skills to Identify the Job Searcher**
2. Essential Skills to Identify the Job
3. Essential Skills to Research Your Occupation
4. Essential Skills to Search for Jobs
5. Essential Skills to Market Yourself with a Resume and Cover Letter
6. Essential Skills to Market Yourself at the Interview
7. Essential Skills to Maintain Employability



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