

Workbook Seven

7

Essential Skills to Maintain Employability





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:

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- Goodwill Ontario Great Lakes
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- London Employment Help Centre
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Canada

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Content developed by Karen Farrar

Design by Tracy Buchkowsky

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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.

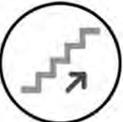
Why are these workbooks unique?

- 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.
	Document use: 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 Seven

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.

(Victor Frankl)

Job search can be a challenging time in your life. You may find that when you get a job, it feels a bit like crossing the finish line in a race. It's a great accomplishment and one you will feel proud of. You will have put in many of hours of work: researching, networking, writing resumes and cover letters and following up. When you become employed you will enjoy the benefits of your labour with a regular paycheque. Your job search will be over.

Well, yes and no. Career experts predict that most workers will have several careers before they retire. Workers who recognize this reality and prepare for it are going to be further ahead than those who do not prepare for these changes.

So how do you prepare for multiple jobs and careers? The most effective way to manage these changes is to continually work on your employability.

Employability, the focus of Workbook Seven, is about making sure that you are always an effective employee for the job that you are doing, as well as for the next one. It is the ability to become employed and remain employed. Workbook Seven is about practices that you can incorporate into your life as an employee that will keep you job-ready. You can work on your employability even while you are searching for a job.

In this workbook you will learn about:

- Managing change
- Setting goals
- Continuous learning
- Training
- Professional organizations
- Maintaining a healthy network
- Developing a portfolio

The unique skills, interests and experience that you bring to your work are valuable to the employer. When you continually improve your skills and broaden your interests and experience, you are ensuring your value as an employee now and into the future.



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 enable 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 and increase your chances of finding work that you want.

In Workbook Seven 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 for 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
Change management	This is the ability to be flexible and continue to learn so that you are able to change when you need to.
Assumption	This means taking something for granted or supposing something.
Self-determination	This means deciding on and influencing your own path in life.
Professional association	This is an organization you can join where all of the members have a common work interest.
Efficiency	This means being effective without wasting time, effort or expense.
Online career network	This is when you use the Internet to help you get in touch with people or organizations that can help you with your job search.
Networking	This is when you work with others to help with your job search.
Career portfolio	This is a file of documents that prove your skills, experience and learning.

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 finished 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 to 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 information on managing change 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read a case study to reflect on the importance of managing change at work 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read about the benefits of setting goals 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read information on Continuous Learning 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read a case study on transferring workshop experience to work 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read about the benefits of belonging to a professional organization 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read about the importance of maintaining a career network 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read about the benefits of creating a career portfolio 								

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 Document Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a chart to keep track of my portfolio documents (Activity 9) 								
Using Writing Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record an example of how I managed change in the past (Activity 1) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record a SMART goal (Activity 2,4, 8) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make notes on new work-related information (Activity 5) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write notes on training research (Activity 6) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write notes about a professional association that interests me (Activity 7) 								
Using Oral Communication I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss reflections with job search colleagues on managing change (Activity 1) 								
Using Thinking Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify assumptions from a case study and use five steps for improving my response to change 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify my ability to manage change in the past (Activity 2) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on a job search goal (Activity 2) 								

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on a training opportunity for myself (Activity 6) 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide how to increase my network (Activity 8) 								
Using Computer Skills I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch online videos to learn more about internet social networking 								
Using Continuous Learning I am able to:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about setting SMART goals 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose a continuous learning opportunity 								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn something new about my field of work (Activity 5) 								

Managing Change



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read information about managing change

One of the keys to being an effective lifelong employee in any number of careers is managing change. Because changes in your career are certain to happen, you might as well be ready for them.

Assumption: The act of taking for granted or supposing something. In this case, what you suppose is going to happen.

If you haven't already done so, read the quotation by Viktor Frankl that begins this workbook. Often, we are unable to do much about the changes happening in the workplace. All we can influence is how we act when change happens. When you pay attention to your own responses to change, you're on your way to becoming an effective change manager.

Five Steps to Improve Your Response to Change

There are five steps to improving your response to change. **Read through these steps and then practise them after you read the case study on page 16.**

1. Identify your assumptions
 - What are my thoughts and assumptions about the change?
2. Consider the implications
 - Are my assumptions helping or hindering me from coping well?
 - Are my assumptions leading me to take constructive action?
3. Examine the evidence
 - Is what I am thinking accurate?
 - Am I being reasonable?
 - Am I focused on something over which I have no control?
 - Am I jumping to conclusions?
 - What am I afraid might happen?

4. Get some perspective

- Talk to others who are coping well
- Find out what others think about what is happening
- Ask yourself if there is another way to look at things

5. Change your thoughts

- What would I tell a good friend or colleague who was thinking this way?
- What is a more positive, helpful way of thinking about this situation?
- What can I begin to tell myself that will help me feel better?
- When I coped well with something like this in the past, what did I tell myself then?



Case Study One



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read a case study to reflect on the importance of managing change at work

Bill is a worker in a small factory that is struggling to compete with overseas production. Rumours are flying about the plant and everyone knows that layoffs – even closure – are looming. Bill has only been working at the factory for about three years. Here are some of Bill’s thoughts as he drives to work in the morning.

“Is today my last day of work?”

“When I lose this job I’m sunk! It took me forever to find it and now it’s even harder to find a job!”

“I may as well forget about being employed any time soon. Why bother looking? Everyone knows there’s nothing out there.”

“How will we ever pay our debts? We’ll have to re-mortgage for sure.”

Suddenly Bill slammed on the brakes. He had been so busy with his thoughts that he did not notice the car in front of him slowing down.

“Great, thought Bill. Keep driving like this and I’ll need a new vehicle, which I won’t be able to afford, at double the insurance!”



Case Study Reflection: Responding to Change



Essential Skills Tip: Thinking (Identify and Solve Problems)

- Identify assumptions from the case study and use five steps for improving response to change

Use the five steps from pages 14 and 15 to answer these questions.

Identify Bill's assumptions

What are Bill's thoughts and assumptions about the upcoming changes at work?

Consider the implications of Bill's thinking

Are Bill's thoughts helping him? Why or why not?

Are his thoughts helping him to take positive or constructive action? Why or why not?

What advice do you have for Bill?

Examine the evidence

Is Bill's thinking accurate and reasonable?

Is he focussed on something over which he has no control?

Is he jumping to conclusions?

What are Bill's fears?

Perspective for Bill

What suggestions do you have for Bill to help him gain some perspective?

Bill needs to change his thoughts

If Bill were your friend or colleague, what would you tell him?

Think of something helpful and positive to enable Bill to cope with this situation.



Activity One: Reflect on Your Ability to Manage Change



Essential Skills Tip: Thinking (Identify and Solve Problems), Writing, Oral Communication

- Identify your own ability to manage change based on past experience
- Record an example of managed change in the past
- Discuss reflections on managing change with job search colleagues

Think about a time in the past when you feel you did (or didn't) manage change well and briefly record it here.

Did you use any of the five steps to help you manage the change? Briefly record how you used a step or how you think you could have used it.

Step	How the step was used or could have been used

Discuss your reflections with one of your job search colleagues. Try to include a discussion of how you manage change well and what you think you can do to improve some of the ways you deal with change.

Setting Goals



Essential Skills Tip: Continuous Learning

- Read about the benefits of setting goals
- Learn about setting SMART goals

It is no surprise that one of the most popular interview questions is, “Where do you see yourself in five years?” Not only does the employer want to know that you would be an ambitious and hard working employee, but they also want to know whether or not you have set any goals for your future.

Studies have shown that there is a strong link between goal setting and workplace performance. The clearer your goals, the more likely you are to achieve them. Setting personal goals, whether or not they are work-related, can also increase your chances of success. Take saving money as an example. If one person thinks they ought to save money, and a second person sets goals around budgeting and spending, who do you think is more likely to succeed?

Perhaps you have come this far in your career and have not set any goals. Why should you start now? Here are five benefits of goal setting.

Five Benefits of Goal Setting

1. **Focus.** If you worked through Workbook Two, you will know that it’s a good idea to have a clear target to focus on. When you set goals, you develop a stronger focus. If you have clear goals and focus on them, you will get more of what you do want (your goals) and less of what you don’t want.
2. **Efficiency.** When you are clear about where you want to go, you can plan steps and actions to get there. Your efficiency is increased because you are working on what is really important to you – your goals. When you are focussed on your goals, you are not as likely to be distracted

3. **Self-determination.** When you set your own goals, you are determining your own path. You will get more of what you really want in life, rather than waiting for whatever comes your way.
4. **Self-confidence.** As you set and reach your goals, you become more confident in your ability to achieve. Setting and achieving goals gives a very concrete sense of your accomplishments.
5. **Results.** Working towards a goal provides you with the focus and motivation to actually reach the goal. Success can be measured in your results.

Setting goals is easy once you know how. There are five essential aspects to any goal which can be summed up by the acronym **SMART**.

- S is for Specific
- M is for Measurable
- A is for Attainable
- R is for Relevant
- T is for Time-sensitive

S is for Specific Goals

Make your goal as detailed as possible to get the results you want. A specific goal is one that is clearly defined so that anyone can read it and understand what you want to accomplish. Your goal should contain a detailed description of what you want to achieve; when you want to accomplish it by; and the action(s) you will take to complete it.

Weak goal example: My goal is to get a job.

SMART goal example: My goal is to spend 35 hours per week on my job search for the next month and then review my progress.



M is for Measurable Goals

Set goals that are measurable in some way because if you can't measure a goal, you can't manage it. Back to the saving money example, in order to make this a measurable goal, you could:

- Decide on the total amount of money to be saved
- Decide on the amount to save each week (measure by figuring out how much you must save each week to reach your total)
- Decide on the number of weeks to save (measure by adding up the number of weeks that you need to save to reach your goal)

A good measurable goal also has a deadline. By viewing the results you should be able to determine whether or not you have completed your goal. You may want to be able to see the progression that you make towards your goal so that you can judge whether or not you are nearing its completion. For example, a person saving money may decide to save \$10 a week for 20 weeks. If the person has not saved \$40 after four weeks, then they know they are not on track to meet their goal.

Weak goal example: I want to make more money in my next job.

SMART goal example: Within a year of starting my next job I want to be making 20% more than I did in my last job.

A is for Attainable Goals

Goals that challenge you are important, but you also need to create goals that are realistic for your situation and skill level. Creating goals that you can't reach (attain) can be discouraging. On the other hand goals that are too easily accomplished do not stretch you or make you grow as a person because they aren't challenging enough. A good goal is challenging, but not extreme.

Weak goal example: I want to become vice-president of the company within 18 months.

SMART goal example: I want to be promoted to a position of responsibility within a year of beginning my next job.

R is for Relevant Goals

Relevant goals are those that are consistent with your personality, that are important to you, and that fit your needs and wants. Create relevant goals and dedicate your time and effort towards goals that are important to you. For instance, owning a sports car might be one person's goal because he or she loves fast cars and driving. However, if you live in the middle of a large city and rely on public transit for most of your transportation needs, this would not be a relevant goal for you.

Weak goal example: I want to become a flight steward. My mother always said I would be really good at that job.

SMART goal example: I want to become a landscaper because I love working outside and with my hands. I love gardening.

T is for Time-Sensitive Goals

The goals you create ought to be time-sensitive. Without a time limit on your goal you might put it off until later. Then you might never get around to doing it. Goals must have definite starting points and ending points and success markers along the way.

Weak goal example: I am going to build my job search network.

SMART goal example: I am going to add six new names to my network each week this month.

By spending some time making sure that your goals fit the SMART criteria, you will ensure your success.

Use the example below as a guide for your own SMART goal.

My SMART Goal	
My Goal: To apply for jobs at a minimum of three workplaces per week this month	
Specific?	Yes. The goal is detailed and defined. What I want to accomplish is clear.
Measurable?	Yes. I can measure success by adding the number of workplaces I have applied to by the end of the month.
Attainable?	Yes. I have prepared a list of workplaces and am capable of adapting my resume and writing three cover letters per week.
Relevant?	Yes. This goal is consistent with where I am in my life right now: I need to find a job!
Time Sensitive?	Yes. I have committed to applying for three jobs per week for one month to carry out this plan.

Activity Two: Set a SMART Goal



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

- Decide on a job search goal
- Record a SMART goal

Set your own SMART goal related to your job search. Make sure that it fits all of the SMART criteria. Use the guide on page 24 as an example of how to fill in your chart.

My SMART Job Search Goal	
My Goal:	
Specific?	
Measurable?	
Attainable?	
Relevant?	
Time Sensitive?	

Setting goals is important to your continued employability.



Continuous Learning



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read information on Continuous Learning

Continuous Learning: Participating in the ongoing process of gaining skills and knowledge.

You probably recognize the phrase “Continuous Learning” from your knowledge of the Essential Skills. Continuous Learning is one of the nine recognized Essential Skills. In other words, it is one of the most important skills for keeping you employed and employable.

Continuous Learning does for your mind what exercise can do for your body. Imagine you are an athlete who competes in a sport. Let’s use soccer as an example.

In order to be on your game you need to:

- Run for cardiovascular fitness
- Weight train for muscle strength
- Stretch for flexibility
- Do ball drills to practise dexterity
- Shoot to practise penalty kicks and scoring

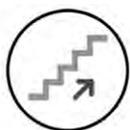
If you did none of these things and only played your games, it wouldn’t be long before you were falling behind the rest of the team and your competition. In fact, you would probably find yourself on the bench or worse, off the team.

Continuous Learning works the same way. If all you do is your job, then your mental fitness levels are going to lag. You may fall behind your colleagues, which could translate into raises for them and not for you – the employment equivalent to being benched. You may lose out to opponents if you are passed by for a promotion you have applied for. Finally, your lack of continuous learning may result in job loss, that is, being kicked off the team.

Continuous Learning ensures that you “keep fit” for the job. So how do you do it?

1. **Look for opportunities to learn.** In this age of information there are learning opportunities everywhere. Check your newspaper for informal groups and classes. Find out what your library is offering. Visit employment centres to learn about their courses and programs. Once you begin looking for opportunities to learn, you will see them everywhere.

Activity Three: Choose a Continuous Learning Opportunity



Essential Skills Tip: Continuous Learning

- Choose a continuous learning opportunity

Choose A or B.

- A. Visit your library online or in person to check out some of their learning opportunities.
- B. Visit a local employment centre that offers job search courses and sign up for one.

Learning Opportunity:
When:
Where:
Cost:
Benefits for your employability:

2. **Set learning goals.** As you have seen, setting goals is an effective way to achieve what you want in life. When you set goals around learning, you increase the likelihood of following through and succeeding with your plans. Whether you are planning to return to school or simply to take a weekend course on meditation, setting goals will help you to make the most of your learning.

Activity Four: Set a Learning Goal



Essential Skills Tip: Thinking (Decision Making), Writing

- Decide on a learning goal
- Record your SMART goal

Use the SMART goal template below to set a learning goal for yourself.

My SMART Learning Goal	
My Goal:	
Specific?	
Measurable?	
Attainable?	
Relevant?	
Time Sensitive?	



3. **Commit to learning something new.** Become a lifelong learner. Commit yourself to learning something new every day, week, or month and you will be on the road to continuous learning.

Activity Five: Learn Something New About Work



Essential Skills Tip: Writing, Continuous Learning

- Learn something new about work
- Make notes about new work-related information

Learn something new about your field of work. Take a book out of the library, do an online search or interview someone about a work-related topic that you would like to know more about. Try to relate your topic to your job search. You may wish to research a workplace or a new job search method. Record at least three facts that are new to you and where you would search next for information on this topic.

Research topic:
Where I did my research:
Fact one:
Fact two:
Fact three:
Next research steps:

When you are out of work, you will be more focused on learning opportunities that will help you gain employment. Don't forget the concept of transferable skills. Many of the skills and experience that you gain from learning in one area of your life can apply in other areas, particularly at work.

In the case study below, see how Karla transfers what she has learned in a workshop to help her during a job interview.

Case Study Two



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read a case study on transferring a workshop experience to work

Karla was in the middle of a job interview to dispatch ambulances for Emergency Medical Transport. She thought the interview had gone very well and she was finally beginning to relax.

The interviewer said, “As you are probably aware, we have a high turnover of dispatchers because of the stress involved. Some take stress leave and others move on to different work. How do you cope with stress on the job?”

Karla thought for a few moments and then said, “You’re right: dispatching can be very stressful work. I don’t know if you noticed, but under “Other Interests” on my resume I have listed meditation. I have taken workshops on meditation, and I find that it really helps me to stay calm in stressful situations. When I dispatched cabs for Red Top, all of the drivers agreed that I was the calmest and best dispatcher in a crisis.”

Training

Whether you are working or looking for work, training is one of the keys to your employment success. You may attend a two-hour session on resume writing or you may take a six-month certificate course at community college. Both are examples of training.

Employers are impressed when the “education” part of your resume includes both education and training. Ongoing and recent training tell the employer that you are interested in learning, that change does not intimidate you and that you can set and achieve learning goals. These are the kind of employees that employers hope for.

Training opportunities are widely available. Before you invest your time and money, read these tips to make the most of your training.

Three Tips to Maximize Training Benefits

- ✓ Take a good look at your resume and ask yourself what kind of training will make you more marketable in the field of your choice.
- ✓ Speak to an employment counsellor. Ask him or her what kind of training would most benefit you in your work search.
- ✓ Speak to an employer. In an informational interview, ask what kind of training they are looking for in their employees.

Activity Six: Decide on a Training Opportunity



Essential Skills Tip: Writing, Thinking (Decision Making)

- Decide on a training opportunity for yourself
- Write notes about training research

Choose one of the above three tips to help you think about your next training opportunity. You may wish to write your notes below.

Training Research

1. Based on your thoughts and research, what kind of training do you think you should be taking?

2. Where is this training available?

3. How much does it cost?

Training on the job

While you are working, it's a good idea to take advantage of the training opportunities made available to you by your employer. Here are just some of the benefits.

- On the job training is often free or paid for by the employer.
- Often, you are paid to take the training because it is held during work hours.
- It relates to the kind of work you do and sometimes, the kind of work you would like to do.
- The training is transferable, so that when you move on to another job, your training stays with you.
- Employers appreciate employees who take training. Employers often put a lot of time, money and effort into the training opportunities they make available to their employees.

Professional Associations



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read about the benefits of belonging to a professional organization

One of the ways you can keep in touch with what is going on in the world of work while you are unemployed is through professional associations. Most trades and professions in Canada and the United States have a professional association where you can gain access to information about what is happening in your field of interest – even when you are not working in it. Many associations put job postings on their websites. You can also join a professional association before you make a career change.

Here are some of the benefits of joining a professional association.

- You will expand your professional network. Contacts become stale and limiting if you stick to a narrow circle of workers.
- You will learn about industry trends. Leaders from industry present and discuss current industry topics.
- You will increase others' awareness of you and your skills and experience.
- You may become aware of new ways of thinking and working within your field.
- You can discover what other companies are doing and find out if they are hiring.
- You may receive a monthly, quarterly, or annual newsletter. Sometimes, professional groups offer job listings and an opportunity for members to advertise what they are looking for.
- Usually you can maintain your membership even if you have lost your job. You can keep up to date on your industry while you are job searching.

How can you make the most of joining a professional association? Here are six strategies to help.

1. Read professional newsletters. Find out more about:
 - Current issues, topics and trends
 - Key players in the field (people and workplaces)
2. Attend association meetings.
3. Set some goals for the meeting. For example, “I am going to meet three to four new contacts.” Collect their business cards and write brief notes on the backs to jog your memory. The notes could be both personal and professional.
4. Take your own job search business cards and hand them out freely. Brush up on your elevator speech.



See **Workbook Four** to learn more about using an elevator speech as a job search tool.

5. Donate your time by getting involved in the association as a volunteer.
6. Maintain memberships in a variety of related groups in order to have a mix of ideas, contacts and workplaces.

There are many websites devoted to professional associations. Here are two that list many of the associations in Canada:

www.cicic.ca

www.charityvillage.com/cv/nonpr/profas.asp

You can also check with your local library or Chamber of Commerce for a list of organizations.

Maintaining an Active Network



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read about the importance of maintaining a career network

No matter how extensive skill or knowledge may be, they are not the only keys to professional success. You also have to “cultivate a network” to demonstrate your skills and expand your professional outlook and horizons.

(From “The Invaluable Benefits of Personal Networks”, by Brian UZZI and Shannon DUNLAP, Harvard Business Review, December 2005.)

If you have been unemployed for a while, you understand the importance of your network. People in your network can help you keep up to date on what is going on in your field of interest. They can give you job leads and connect you to others in your line of work.

If you’re already working, your network can keep you up to date on what’s happening in your field of work. It allows you to make connections that will be useful when it’s time to change your job. Your network can give you information that might not be available to you in your workplace.

Here are some ideas for maintaining an active network both while you are employed and unemployed.

Keep in Touch. People are more willing to help when they know you. Don’t only contact network members when you’ve recently been laid-off from your job or when you want to look for a new position. Keep in touch with your network regularly, even if it’s just a brief email, a greeting or to ask how they are doing.

Keep Adding to Your Network. If the names in your network have remained the same for the past several months or more, it's time to look for new contacts. You may find you have out of date information and connections if you do not make the effort to keep your network growing.

Give Back to Your Career Network. Networking works both ways. Share relevant job listings with your network members. This kind of exchange will strengthen your network relationships.

Keep a Network Record. Whether it's done electronically or on paper, keep track of your network. Record names, connections, where they work and how to contact them.

Activity Eight: Set a SMART Goal to Increase Your Network



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

- Decide how to increase your network
- Record a SMART Goal

Set a SMART goal to increase the size and value of your network.

My SMART Networking Goal	
My Goal:	
Specific?	
Measurable?	
Attainable?	
Relevant?	
Time Sensitive?	

Developing a Career Portfolio



Essential Skills Tip: Reading

- Read about the benefits of creating a career portfolio

A career portfolio is a valuable tool for your employability. It includes documents that prove your experience, skills and learning. Your portfolio should be a work in progress – one that you are always adding to and refining. What are the benefits of a career portfolio? According to the experts, there are several.

Benefits of a Career Portfolio

Your Portfolio is a Career Showcase. Your documentation makes your skills and experiences concrete for employers to see.

Your Portfolio is an Archive. It is a place to store all of the documentation from your education, training and experience that have helped you get work. You can keep paper copies in a file folder, a large envelope or even a shoe box. You might also store this information on a computer or on a disc.

Your Portfolio is a Career Development Record. A portfolio shows your career development process, past, present and future.

Your Portfolio Provides Proof of Your Past Work Experience. You have proof of when and where you worked should you need it. You may work in a job where the business shuts down. If you keep your documentation, you will have proof of where and when you worked for future employers.

Your Portfolio Supplies the Raw Materials for Future Resumes and Cover

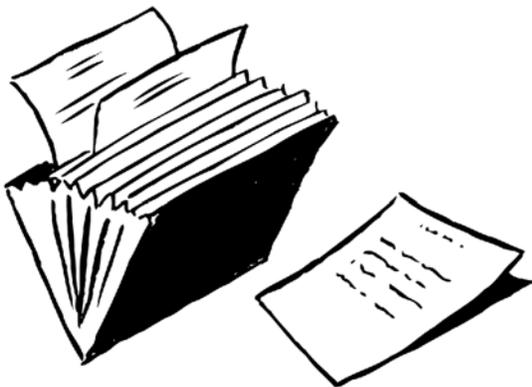
Letters. Do you remember how difficult it was to create your first resume?

Materials and information often have to be gathered from a variety of places and people. A portfolio keeps all of this information together so that it is available to you when you need it.

Now that you know why you should keep a career portfolio, what should you include? Here are some of the documents that you will want to keep.

- Records of Employment (ROE), given to you when you leave a job
- Your past and current resumes
- All of your cover letters
- Documents related to education, including certificates and diplomas
- Training certificates
- Dates and descriptions of any training you have attended
- Emails or notes from your employer that comment on your work habits and abilities
- Awards
- Documents related to volunteer experience and hours
- Your documentation of your career history – notes on your accomplishments

Your career history will likely be a long one. When you document your career and maintain your portfolio you capture all of the useful information for your continued employability.



Activity Nine: Keep Track of Your Career Portfolio Documents



Essential Skills Tip: Document Use

- Use a chart to keep track of your portfolio documents

Start to develop your career portfolio. Use a binder, an accordion file or a shoe box to keep your portfolio documents. Use the list below and see how many of these documents you can gather.

Record of Portfolio Documents	Yes	No
Records of Employment (ROE)		
All of your resume versions		
All of your cover letters		
Documents related to education, including certificates and diplomas		
Training certificates		
Dates and descriptions of any training you have attended		
Emails or notes from your employer		
Awards		
Documents related to volunteer experience and hours		
Your documentation of your career history—notes on your accomplishments		
Other:		
Other:		

Conclusion

Nothing stays the same. People, places and situations are always changing. Learning to manage change during your job search and at work will increase your value as an employee as well as your ability to be flexible and open to all of the changes you will face.



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**



Literacy Link South Central

Email: literacylink@bellnet.ca

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