

Essential Skills are the skills needed for work, learning and life. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change.

Through extensive research, the Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified and validated nine Essential Skills. These skills are used in nearly every occupation and throughout daily life in different ways and at different levels of complexity.

Essential Skills are **enabling skills** that:

1. Help people perform the tasks required by their occupation and other activities of daily life.
2. Provide people with a foundation to learn other skills.
3. Enhance people's ability to adapt to change.

There are nine Essential Skills:

1. Reading Text
2. Use of Documents
3. Writing
4. Numeracy
5. Oral Communication
6. Thinking Skills
7. Working with Others
8. Computer Use
9. Continuous Learning

1. Reading Text

- Reading Text refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs.
- generally involves reading notes, letters, memos, manuals, specifications, regulations, books, reports or journals.

Reading Text includes:

- forms and labels if they contain *at least one paragraph*.
- print and non-print media (for example, texts on computer screens and microfiche).
- paragraph-length text in charts, tables and graphs.

2. Document Use

- Document Use refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics (eg., line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. For example, graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs and labels are documents used in the world of work.

Document Use includes:

- print and non-print media (for example, computer screen, equipment gauges, clocks and flags).
- reading/interpreting and writing/completing/producing of documents – these two uses of documents often occur simultaneously as part of the same task, e.g., completing a form, checking off items on a list of tasks, plotting information on a graph, and entering information on an activity schedule.

3. Writing

Writing includes:

- writing texts and writing in documents (for example, filling in forms).
- non-paper-based writing (for example, typing on a computer).

4. Numeracy

- Numeracy refers to the workers' use of numbers and their being required to think in quantitative terms.
- examples include making bill payments, calculating discounts, budgeting, and measuring quantities.

5. Oral Communication

- pertains primarily to the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information by workers in an occupational group.
- examples include following or giving instructions, interacting with customers, participating in face to face meetings and making presentations to a group.

6. Thinking Skills

- Thinking Skills include: problem solving, decision-making, critical thinking, job task planning and organizing, memory use and finding information.

7. Working with Others

- Working with Others examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks.
- For example: does the employee work well in a home environment; does the employee work well independently yet still within a group; does the employee work jointly with a partner; does the employee work well as a team?

8. Computer Use

- Computer Use examines the variety and complexity of computer use within the occupational group.
- Computer Use ranges from simple data entry to highly complex design and set up of new computer networks.

9. Continuous Learning

- Continuous Learning examines the requirement for workers to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge.

- it is becoming apparent that more and more jobs require continuous upgrading, and that all workers must continue learning in order to keep or to grow with their jobs.
- knowing how to learn; understanding one's own learning style; and knowing how to gain access to a variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities will become essential skills.
- examples of Continuous Learning include: training in job-related health and safety; obtaining and updating credentials; and learning about new equipment, procedures, products and services.

A more detailed description of Essential Skills can be found on the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada web site at:

http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/readers_guide_whole.shtml#19

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