Essential Skills/Employability Skills

Essential skills and employability skills are used in both the workplace and everyday life. Understanding and utilizing both sets of skills are vital to succeeding and adapting in today’s current workforce. Essentials skills include skills applicable to aspects of everyday life such as writing, reading and computer use skills. Employability skills are skills required for the workplace and can include skills such as attitude, stress management and time management. Although they differ, it is important that individuals are versed in both sets of skills for the current job market.

Essential Skills

Essential skills include the skills associated with literacy (i.e. reading, writing, document use and numeracy) but goes beyond to also include thinking skills, oral communication, computer use/digital skills, working with others and the skills associated with continuous learning. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to better prepare for, get and keep a job, and adapt and succeed at work (Government of Canada, 2015).

The essential skills are: Reading, Writing, Document Use, Numeracy, Computer Use/Digital Skills, Thinking, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Continuous Learning.

Reading

Reading refers to reading material in the form of sentences or paragraphs. It generally involves reading notes, letters, memos, specifications, regulation, books, reports of journals.

Reading includes:
- Forms and labels if they contain at least one paragraph
- Print and non-print media (for example, text on computer screens and microfiche)
- Paragraph-length in charts, tables and graphs

Writing

Document Use

Document use involves a variety if information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics (i.e. line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. For example, graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawing, signs and labels are documents used in the world of work.

Document use includes:
- Print and non-print media (for example, computer screen or microfiche documents, equipment gauges, clocks and flags)
- Reading/interpreting and writing/completing/producing of documents (i.e. completing a form, checking off items on a list of tasks, plotting information on a graph, and entering information on an activity schedule.

Numeracy

Numeracy refers to the workers’ use of numbers and their capacity to think in quantitative terms.
Computer Use/Digital Skills
Computer use indicates the variety and complexity of computer use within the occupational group.

Thinking
Thinking differentiates between six types of interconnected cognitive function:

- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Critical thinking
- Job task planning and organizing
- Significant use of memory
- Finding information

Oral Communication
Oral communication pertains primarily to the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information by workers in an occupational group.

Working with Others
Working with others examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks. Do they have to work co-operatively with others? Do they have to have the self-discipline to meet work targets while working alone?

Continuous Learning
Continuous learning tests the hypothesis that more and more jobs require continuous upgrading and all workers must continue learning to keep or to grow with their jobs. If this is true, then the following will become essential skills:

- Knowing how to learn
- Understanding one’s own learning style; and
- Knowing how to gain access to variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities.

Employability Skills
Employability skills are critical skills needed in the workplace – whether you are self-employed or working with others. These are the soft skills individuals need to enter, stay in and progress in the workplace.

Motivation
Motivation is the desire to set and achieve high standards on the job. Fundamentally, motivation speaks to the individual’s desire to be an excellent employee; it involves showing a willingness to expend the effort needed to excel. This can include striving for specific work standards, but also high personal standards associated with goal setting, showing initiative, and doing one’s best with an without supervision.

Accountability
A person’s willingness to admit mistakes, accept responsibility for them, learn from mistakes, accept feedback constructively, monitor the quality of their work when unsupervised; and display an honest and ethical approach to work and others in the workplace.
**Attitude**
The way an individual shows or expresses their feelings about a person (i.e. supervisor, co-worker), work activity, event or ideal. They can show their feelings verbally (tone, inflection, whining, etc.) or behaviorally (body language, inappropriate physical actions, etc.). The focus is not on internally held attitudes, but rather

**Time Management**
A person’s ability to set and follow priorities, properly follow schedules for arrival, breaks, etc., and stay on task in an efficient manner. The latter includes meeting deadlines and communicating efficiently with others.

**Stress Management**
A person’s ability to experience workplace stress without it impacting on their performance or coworkers. It also includes the person’ ability to keep personal stress out of the workplace. It requires that an employee seek help for stress issues in a timely manner.

**Presentation**
The way a person appears to others in terms of their dress and adornments, hygiene, etiquette, manner and language.

**Teamwork**
A person’s ability to work cooperatively with others; handle conflict and anger appropriately, communicate effectively, be empathetic and respect difference (cultural, religious, gender, etc.).

**Adaptability**
A person’s ability to react constructively to both anticipated and unanticipated changes in the workplace, take responsibility for learning needed to adapt to change, and adjust how they interact with others based on previous experience or the formality of the situation.

**Confidence**
Having a belief in one’s own competence and the ability to express one’s own perspective to others. It includes being able to function in uncertain situation, being appropriately assertive and taking reasonable chances.

The employability skills are defined by Futureworx and the Employability Skills Assessment Tool (ESAT).