

How the Nine Essential Skills Affect Working Canadians

The Government of Canada recognizes nine essential skills that are used to some degree in every occupation. Despite our reliance on these skills, Canadians fail to focus on their importance and how to keep them sharp. With a changing economy, practicing your nine essential skills will prove beneficial in the workplace.

Refreshing your nine essential skills:

Reading Text

Reading involves one's ability to understand written text. In the workplace, it can be presented in many forms including letters, memos, reports, company regulations, instructions and forms.

From understanding a recipe to decoding a customer order and staying on top of food industry regulations, **bakers** need to keep their reading skills sharp so as not to accidentally bake chocolate cakes instead of vanilla.

Document Use

Document use involves the ability to interpret and work with information presented in multiple ways including numbers, symbols, words and shapes.

Data entry clerks use keyboards to input numbers, statistical information and codes everyday. They may refer to invoices and billing codes for clients. Data entry clerks also assess data for accuracy and meaning from applications, job reports, and surveys. It is important to keep this skill sharp to help ensure accuracy on the job.

Numeracy

Numeracy involves working with numbers and thinking in quantitative terms.

Though you may think of **painters** as only having to put colour on walls, they use numeracy skills everyday when they calculate the amount of paint they will need for a job, what percentage of different colours to mix together to meet a client request, as well as calculating the cost of supplies and charges to a client. Nothing is worse than running out of paint with half a wall still to finish.

Writing

Writing involves the skill to write documents, text or typing on a computer.

Newspaper and magazine **editors** review, edit and evaluate articles, news reports and other forms of written material. Editors write their own materials such as emails, letters to authors and headlines for book titles. They also rewrite text to improve the structure and flow of newsletters. It is important for editors to have a keen eye when revising other writers' work.

Oral Communication

Oral communication involves using speech to exchange ideas and information.

Hairstylists communicate everyday on the job. From the initial greeting of customers to listening and communicating about how they will cut or colour their hair to sharing information with co-workers, it's all in a days work for hairstylists.

Working with Others

Working with others involves accomplishing a specific task or job in a group setting.

Retail sales associates are part of a team made up of sales clerks, managers and owners. They work together on such things as setting up store displays, providing guidance to new employees and resolving issues with customers. Being able to work with multiple people on a shared task is an essential skill on the job. After all, collaboration gets the job completed more efficiently.

Thinking Skills

Thinking skills involve evaluating information to come to a rational decision.

Pharmacists dispense prescribed medicine and provide information to clients regarding their prescriptions and health. They evaluate written procedures and codes for pharmacists, including the ethics around releasing patient information, and critically review articles to be published in pharmaceutical journals. Thinking skills need to stay sharp in this fast-paced job. It can be a matter of life and death if the skills are not sharp.

Computer Use

Computer use involves the ability to operate computer software and application tools.

While **bookkeepers** maintain sets of records of accounts and books, they provide much more. Bookkeepers use computer software to edit and format texts, databases for updating previous accounts and modify accounting, and financial spreadsheets. Staying up to date with computer software allows best results for your clients and organization.

Continuous Learning

Continuous learning involves participating in an ongoing process of learning new skills and techniques.

Computer programmers write, test and modify computer codes for software and applications. They regularly learn from consulting supervisors and co-workers through discussions, reading software manuals and formal training activities such as courses. It is important to keep up-to-date with new techniques to guarantee accuracy.