



# Essential Skills Day Event Guide



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## About Essential Skills Day

Essential Skills Day is a national celebration held annually in September to raise awareness of the importance of workplace literacy and essential skills training. It was created by ABC Life Literacy Canada in 2010. The Government of Canada has identified nine essential skills that we all use in every job (see page 3 for full list). They are the foundation for learning all other skills and let us grow with our jobs and handle changes at work.

**Improved literacy and essential skills can be the answer to better productivity and economic growth. Investing in these skills through workplace training and lifelong learning opportunities makes sound economic and social sense and may be key to ensuring Canadians thrive in an evolving and more digitized workplace.**

*Source: Top 10 Barriers to Competitiveness 2016, The Canadian Chamber of Commerce.*

Canadian employers have reported that improved literacy skills result in increased retention, productivity, independence of work and improved usage of new technology. Improved literacy skills also reduce absenteeism, health and safety incidents and error rates.



## Facts and Stats about Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills

### The nine essential skills are:

- Reading
- Document use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral communication
- Working with others
- Thinking
- Computer use
- Continuous learning

### The adult literacy challenge:

In Canada, the number of people who struggle with literacy skills has increased to almost one in two the past decade. As a result these Canadians may be unable to meet the skills demands required in today's workforce.



Building Essentials Skills within organizations provides solutions for:

### **1. Fundamental change in the business**

- Smoother transition and greater adaptability to workplace change
- Ensures training is understood and implemented
- Ensures information and resources are communicated effectively

### **2. Health and safety concerns**

- Training is better understood the first time
- Workplace information is more accessible to employees
- Employees have improved understanding of how to work safely, leading to reduced health and safety incidents

### **3. Paperwork and document-use problems**

- Improved ability to complete workplace tasks especially those involving paperwork and technology
- Employees are better able to complete documents
- Employees are able to provide information more accurately

### **4. Communication, teamwork or leadership needs**

- Improved teamwork work and increased participation in decision making
- Better ability to communicate with and learn from each other
- Improved customer service

### **5. Errors and waste**

- Better ability to complete tasks
- Improved understanding of where to find information to complete tasks
- Increased workplace efficiency

*SOURCE: Advancing Workplace Learning Project: a joint initiative of Canadian Literacy and Learning Network and ABC Life Literacy Canada*

For more facts, stats and sources for the above, visit [upskillsforwork.ca](http://upskillsforwork.ca)



## Ways to participate in Essential Skills Day

Here are some ideas for running an Essential Skills Day competition:

1. **Overcoming obstacles:** Create teams of four. Three team members are blindfolded and one team member gives them verbal directions to successfully navigate a series of obstacles/challenges (one obstacle at a time).
2. **Estimation Station:** Team members are shown several different objects filled with different types of smaller objects (i.e. candy in a jar or toothpicks in a cup) and are asked to estimate how many items are in each object. Points will be awarded according to how close each team's guess is to the actual number of smaller objects.
3. **Map attack:** Each team member is asked to locate ten key areas on the map provided. The objective of this challenge is to correctly identify as many areas as possible on the map within a given time frame.
4. **Working together:** All team members stand on a flat tarp or large piece of fabric on the ground. The team's objective will be to turn the tarp/fabric over, without having any of its members' body parts (i.e. arms feet, etc .) ever leave the tarp/fabric. In order for the task to be completed successfully, the tarp/fabric must be turned over completely.
5. **Your shoelaces are untied:** Divide the team into pairs. Each pair is given a shoe with untied laces. Each pair will have to tie the shoe using only one teammate's left hand, and the other teammate's right hand. In order for the task to be completed successfully, both sets of shoelaces will need to be tied within an allotted time frame.

*SOURCE: How to Run an Essential Skills Day Competition, Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, ESDC*



## Ways to participate in Essential Skills Day continued

Here are more ways your organization can celebrate Essential Skills Day:

1. Ask employees to **write an informal letter** of recognition about a colleague.
2. **Host an open house for local businesses** to talk about the importance of skills training. Demonstrate the impact training has on improving productivity, health and safety, and retention rates, among other things. Let them know what training opportunities and services are available to them.
3. **Contact the media** Issue a press release on Essential Skills Day or download our story at [upskillsforwork.ca](http://upskillsforwork.ca) to send to local media such as your community newspaper.
4. **Join the conversation** Follow ABC on Twitter [@abclifeliteracy](https://twitter.com/abclifeliteracy) and on Facebook. Participate in the conversation using the hashtag **#The9atWork**.



## The Nine Essential Skills



**Reading** – The ability to understand reading materials in the form of sentences or paragraphs. We use this skill to scan for information, skim for overall meaning, evaluate what we read and integrate information from multiple sources.



**Document use** – The ability to perform tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, symbols and other visual characteristics are given meaning by their spatial relationship. We use this skill when we read and interpret signs, labels, lists, graphs and charts.



**Numeracy** – The ability to use numbers and think in quantitative terms. We use this skill when doing numerical estimating, money math, scheduling or budgeting math and analyzing measurements or data.



**Writing** – The ability to write text and documents; it also includes non paper-based writing such as typing on a computer. We use this skill when we organize, record, document, provide information to persuade, request information from others and justify a request.



**Oral communication** – The ability to use speech to give and exchange thoughts and information. We use this skill to greet people, take messages, reassure, persuade, seek information and resolve conflicts.



## The Nine Essential Skills continued



**Working with others** – The ability to work with other workers to carry out tasks. We use this skill when we work as a member of a team or jointly with a partner, and when we engage in supervisory or leadership activities.



**Thinking** – The ability to engage in the process of evaluating ideas or information to reach a rational decision. We use this skill when we solve problems, make decisions, think critically and plan and organize job tasks.



**Computer use** – The ability to use different kinds of digital technology including computer applications and other related technical tools. We use this skill when we operate cash registers, use word processing software, send emails and create and modify spreadsheets.



**Continuous learning** – The ability to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge. We use this skill when we learn as part of regular work or from co-workers and when we access training in the workplace or off-site.

**Visit [EssentialSkillsDay.ca](https://EssentialSkillsDay.ca) and find out how you can get started building a stronger workforce through skills training.**



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