

Trades Access Common Core Competency B-2:  
Describe Expectations and Responsibilities of  
Employers and Employees – 2nd Edition



# Trades Access Common Core Competency B-2: Describe Expectations and Responsibilities of Employers and Employees – 2nd Edition

Line B: Employability Skills

Camosun College

BCCAMPUS  
VICTORIA, B.C.



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[BCcampus Open Education](#) began in 2012 as the B.C. Open Textbook Project with the goal of making post-secondary education in British Columbia more accessible by reducing students' costs through the use of open textbooks and other OER. [BCcampus](#) supports the post-secondary institutions of British Columbia as they adapt and evolve their teaching and learning practices to enable powerful learning opportunities for the students of B.C. BCcampus Open Education is funded by the [British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training](#) and the [Hewlett Foundation](#).

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## About the Book

In an effort to make this book a flexible resource for trainers and learners, the following features are included:

- An introduction outlining the high-level goal of the Competency, and a list of objectives reflecting the skills and knowledge a person would need to achieve to fulfill this goal.
- Discrete Learning Tasks designed to help a person achieve these objectives.
- Self-tests at the end of each Learning Task, designed to informally test for understanding.
- A reminder at the end of each Competency to complete a Competency test. Individual trainers are expected to determine the requirements for this test, as required.
- Throughout the textbook, there may also be links and/or references to other resources that learners will need to access, some of which are only available online.
- Notes, cautions, and warnings are identified by special symbols. A list of those symbols is provided below.

### Second Edition Changes

In the Winter of 2020, work was done to revise and add content to this book that aligns both with the advancements in technology and the changing face of the skilled trades industry. These changes are predominantly focused on content in B2 through B4 and reflect the ongoing diversification of the trades, with a focus on the use of inclusive language in the text. In addition, this second edition provides more in-depth resources with regard to harassment, conflict resolution, employment-seeking strategies, mentorship, and effective communication skills. In addition, test material in the book was expanded upon to reflect the incorporation of the updated content.

### History of the Trades Access Common Core Resources

The concept of identifying and creating resources for skills that are common to many trades has a long history in the Province of British Columbia. This collection of Trades Access Common Core (TACC) resources was adapted from the 15 Trades Common Core line modules co-published by the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) and the Centre for Curriculum Transfer and Technology (C2T2) in 2000-2002. Those modules were revisions of the original Common Core portion of the TRAC modules prepared by the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Post-Secondary Education in 1986. The TACC resources are still in use by a number of trades programs today and, with the permission from the Industry Training Authority (ITA), have been utilized in this project.

These open resources have been updated and realigned to match many of the line and competency titles found in the Province of BC's trades apprenticeship program outlines. A review was carried out to analyze the provincial program outlines of a number of trades, with the intent of finding common

entry-level learning tasks that could be assembled into this package. This analysis provided the template for the outline used to update the existing modules. Many images found in ITA apprentice training modules were also incorporated into these resources to create books that are similar to what students will see when they continue their chosen trades training. The project team has also taken many new photographs for this project, which are available for use in other trades training resources.

The following list of lines and competencies was generated with the goal of creating an entry-level trades training resource, while still offering the flexibility for lines to be used as stand-alone books. This flexibility—in addition to the textbook content being openly licensed—allows these resources to be used within other contexts as well. For example, instructors or institutions may incorporate these resources into foundation-level trades training programming or within an online learning management system (LMS).

- Line A – Safe Work Practices
  - A-1 Control Workplace Hazards
  - A-2 Describe WorkSafeBC Regulations
  - A-3 Handle Hazardous Materials Safely
  - A-4 Describe Personal Safety Practices
  - A-5 Describe Fire Safety
- Line B – Employability Skills
  - B-1 Apply Study and Learning Skills
  - B-2 Describe Expectations and Responsibilities of Employers and Employees
  - B-3 Use Interpersonal Communication Skills
  - B-4 Describe the Apprenticeship System
- Line C –Tools and Equipment
  - C-1 Describe Common Hand Tools and Their Uses
  - C-2 Describe Common Power Tools and Their Uses
  - C-3 Describe Rigging and Hoisting Equipment
  - C-4 Describe Ladders and Platforms
- Line D – Organizational Skills
  - D-1 Solve Trades Mathematical Problems
  - D-2 Apply Science Concepts to Trades Applications
  - D-3 Read Drawings and Specifications
  - D-4 Use Codes, Regulations, and Standards
  - D-5 Use Manufacturer and Supplier Documentation
  - D-6 Plan Projects
- Line E – Electrical Fundamentals



- E-1 Describe the Basic Principles of Electricity
- E-2 Identify Common Circuit Components and Their Symbols
- E-3 Explain Wiring Connections
- E-4 Use Multimeters

## Safety Advisory

Be advised that references to the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia safety regulations contained within these materials do not/may not reflect the most recent Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. The current Standards and Regulation in BC can be obtained at from the [WorkSafeBC website](#).

Please note that it is always the responsibility of any person using these materials to inform themselves about the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation pertaining to their area of work.

## Disclaimer

The materials in the Trades Access Common Core open textbook are for use by students and instructional staff and have been compiled from sources believed to be reliable and to represent best current opinions on these subjects. These manuals are intended to serve as a starting point for good practices and may not specify all minimum legal standards. No warranty, guarantee, or representation is made by BCcampus as to the accuracy or sufficiency of the information contained in these publications. These manuals are intended to provide basic guidelines for trade practices. Do not assume, therefore, that all necessary warnings and safety precautionary measures are contained in this module and that other or additional measures may not be required.

## Symbols Legend



**Important:** This icon highlights important information.



**Poisonous:** This icon is a reminder for a potentially toxic/poisonous situation.



**Resources:** The resource icon highlights any required or optional resources.



**Flammable:** This icon is a reminder for a potentially flammable situation.



**Self-test:** This icon reminds you to complete a self-test.



**Explosive:** This icon is a reminder for a possibly explosive situation.



**Safety gear:** The safety gear icon is an important reminder to use protective equipment.



**Electric shock:** This icon is a reminder for potential electric shock.

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## Introduction

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



A BCcampus element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=28>

As you enter the workforce, it is important to understand the major trends in employment and how to find this information. In this competency, we'll look at some of the current major trends in employment in Canada and British Columbia. This review includes an overview of the economy, skills that employers look for, and employee expectations. We'll also look at effective strategies for entering the labour market and finding a job.

In general, employers look for and hire individuals who they believe will be a good fit for their company, in both the short and long term. This includes hiring individuals who have both the “hard” and “soft” skills they desire. Your hard skills are skills that you have accomplished or have credentials for, such as a trade certificate, WHMIS, first aid training, or proficiency in a foreign language. Your soft skills, sometimes referred to as “people skills,” are those you acquire through your education and life experiences. Examples of soft skills include effective communication, problem-solving ability, flexibility, creativity, customer service skills, and the ability to work with others. These skills are necessary to keep a company or organization competitive and able to adapt to changes in the workplace. As a tradesperson, having the appropriate trades qualifications will get your résumé in the review pile, but it is all of the additional soft skills you possess that will help get you an interview and determine whether you are the right candidate for an employer.

### Learning Objectives

When you have completed the Learning Tasks in this Competency, you should be able to:

- describe the trends affecting employment in the Canadian and British Columbia economies
- describe employer expectations and job satisfaction
- describe respect in the workplace
- describe how to maintain healthy customer and co-worker relations
- describe stress management techniques

- describe effective problem solving and decision making
- describe effective job-search strategies
- create a cover letter and résumé

## Resources



You will be required to reference publications and videos available online.

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## Learning Task 1: Employment Trends

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



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Being informed about the trends that are transforming employment and the workplace will give you a greater understanding of the labour market and what you need to find employment.

The working world has undergone significant changes in the past two generations. Fifty years ago, most working individuals had a single employer or worked in one occupation for the majority of their lives. Smaller towns or cities revolved around one or two major employers in a specific industry. By the 1980s, most of our parents' generation had transitioned through recessions, elimination of jobs in the public and private sector, downsizing of industries, and the movement of jobs overseas. Over the past decade, we've seen the adoption of digital (computer) technologies spread throughout the working world and in all facets of manufacturing and machinery. This has led to rapid change in the workplace and a need for employers and employees to be ready to adapt to further changes.

Most individuals entering the job market in the 21st century will work for multiple employers and in a number of sectors over the course of their time in the labour force. With almost every industry adopting digital technologies, workers will be required to learn new skills and adapt to an ever-changing workforce. Many will work in more than one sector of employment, and most of the work available, particularly in the trades, will be on contract or project based. More individuals will be self-employed and need the skill sets to manage their own small business.

The three major trends affecting the Canadian and British Columbia economies in 2015 were:

- increased competition within global markets
- a shortage of workers with specific credentials
- a skills gap

In 2014, the Conference Board of Canada released a report titled "Skills for Success: Developing Skills for a Prosperous B.C." In this report it was noted that skills gaps cost the B.C. economy approximately \$4.7 billion annually in gross domestic product (GDP) and an additional \$616 million in provincial tax revenue (Stuckey and Munro, 2014). According to the report:

For B.C. to sustain its economy, pursue new opportunities, and achieve its full economic potential, not

only will it require an educated and highly skilled workforce to meet near- to medium-term needs, but also one that has the ability to adapt to changing economic and social circumstances and opportunities (Stuckey and Munro, 2014, p. 2).

Over one-third of the Canadian employers surveyed for the report indicated a need for employees with trades qualifications and credentials, with the highest demands for millwrights, heavy-duty equipment mechanics, welders, and industrial electricians (Stuckey and Munro, 2014).

Employers also expressed concern about the insufficient essential skills of recent graduates and potential employees, with the greatest weaknesses noted in critical thinking and problem solving (73%), oral communication (38%), literacy (36%), and working with others (33%) (Stuckey and Munro, 2014). Similar data exists for other Canadian provinces as well. For example, in Ontario it is estimated that insufficient essential skills cost the province \$24.3 billion in GDP annually. Through extensive research over the past two decades in numerous post-industrialized countries, there is evidence to show a direct correlation between a company's productivity and the essential skills of employees.

## Labour Market Projections

The job of predicting changes in the labour market is performed by a number of different organizations and individuals, including the federal and provincial governments, banks, business associations (such as local chambers of commerce), academics, and private think tanks. These predictions are used for different purposes. For example, because of Canada's aging population and low birth rate, it has become increasingly important for the federal and provincial governments to forecast the number of workers that will be needed in the short term and long term in different occupations in order to replace workers lost through attrition (loss of skilled workers due to retirement and other reasons), and to project areas of growth in the economy that require additional workers.

These forecasts are used by the public and education sectors to determine where there will be skills shortages and need for more training. In cases where specific jobs are becoming obsolete, these projections help in plans for retraining employees to work in other sectors of the economy. Where the demand for skilled workers cannot be met, either within British Columbia or Canada as a whole, these projections are also integral to determining changes to the country's immigration policies.



The following reports on the WorkBC website may help you gain a better understanding of British Columbia's labour market:

- [British Columbia Labour Market Outlook 2022](#)
- [High Opportunity Occupations in British Columbia](#)
- [Trade Occupations Outlook](#)

While you are on the WorkBC website, take the opportunity to explore it in detail. You'll find information that is regularly updated on the labour market forecasts by province, region, and occupation. The site also

offers a “Blueprint Builder,” which provides you with all the information you will need to explore careers both in the trades and other fields, as well as information on jobs currently available: [WorkBC](#)

## Global Marketplace, Technology, and Environmental Concerns

We now live in a global economy in which very few products are fully developed, manufactured, and assembled in a single country. Components for most manufactured goods originate from a number of different companies, and products may be assembled anywhere in the world. For example, a car made in Canada may have over 50% of its components manufactured in other countries. Customer service may be provided thousands of miles away from the location of a company or its customer base. The ability to compete on a global scale is integral to Canada’s economic future.

According to the Conference Board of Canada’s report “Innovation and Technology—Increasing Canadian Competitiveness” (Preston, 2015), 99.9% of all Canadian companies are small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with fewer than 500 employees. These companies employ approximately 90% of all individuals in the Canadian private sector. The adoption of digital technologies by SMEs in Canada is key to becoming more competitive internationally.

Depending on what trade you are in, you may be required to learn about and use new technologies and materials on a regular basis. You may also have to look for solutions for retrofitting , upgrading, and servicing older equipment that is no longer being manufactured. Many of the newer technologies being adopted will be more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable in response to changes in government legislation and a growing public awareness of the effects of pollution locally, nationally, and globally. These factors can trigger changes to building codes and practices and procedures in your industry. The ability to be informed and adapt to the changes are part of continuous learning, one of the nine essential skills desired by employers. These skills are described below.

## Changing Organizational Structures and Diversity in the Workplace

The retirement of baby boomers (individuals born between 1945 and 1960) over the next few decades will result in significant shortages of skilled labour not only in Canada, but in most advanced economies around the world. Millions of baby boomers will retire in the next 15 years. Coupled with a low birth rate, this will present significant challenges and opportunities.

Canada continues to diversify its industry by finding more skilled labour in underrepresented groups; including women, Indigenous peoples and landed immigrants. These underrepresented groups represent a previously untapped resource in the skilled trades. People that fall into one or more of these groups may face challenges in finding employment in the skilled trades due to biases and stereotypes that exist. The increased discrimination of people that identify with multiple underrepresented groups is often referred to as intersectionality. Several initiatives are in place to encourage these groups to pursue a career in the trades to help offset the labour shortage.

Women represent greater than 50% of Canada’s population, but according to a 2020 report by the

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF-FCA), make up less than 5% of the skilled trades workforce. This number has only increased marginally over the last decade and with the impending labour shortage it is important to increase representation of women in the skilled trades to help address this. Women have a long history of stepping into skilled trades positions, which is exemplified by their work during World War II, which saw women take on roles such as producing munitions, building ships and airplanes, in engineering, and in the metal and shipbuilding industries, as welders, riveters and more. Stereotypes and myths still exist today that deter women from entering the skilled trades, fewer young women are presented the trades as a career option than young men. These misconceptions will have a dire effect on the labour market in the future if they are not addressed, as the exclusion of a large pool of the population makes filling skilled labour positions more challenging.

Indigenous peoples in Canada are also an underrepresented group in our skilled trades workforce. According to a 2019 report entitled “Promoting Careers in the Skilled Trades to Indigenous Youth in Canada” by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF-FCA), there is a lack of awareness of the skilled trades as a career among Indigenous youth. Surveyed respondents indicated that barriers to access of shop classes, mentorship by Indigenous journeypersons and unwelcoming institutions and workplaces were also reasons for Indigenous peoples to not pursue a career in the skilled trades. This lack of promotion and inclusivity also limits the opportunity to increase the skilled trades workforce with Canadian workers.

According to Statistics Canada (2011), as of 2012, 20.6% of Canada’s population was born outside of Canada. As of 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2010) this percentage is expected to increase to 25% to 28%. Among the challenges to be addressed are greater cultural diversity in the workplace, greater gender diversity in the workplace, recognition of prior learning experiences and credentials from other countries, and English language acquisition.

As part of increased workplace diversity to meet labour shortages, industry also needs to consider the meaning and implementation of equity in operational and hiring practices. **Equity** is a term that is often confused with **equality**, it is important to understand the difference between these two terms and how they apply to the success of a diverse workforce. Equality is giving everyone the same thing regardless of their needs, whereas equity is giving each person the supports they require to be successful. As work is done towards diversifying workplaces, there is a need to ensure that employees have the tools that they need to become successful members of the team. Consider the following: a public library is located at the top of a large steep staircase; in order to access the library everyone must climb the stairs, there are no other options for access; this is an example of equality as the library is accessible to everyone in the same way.

This example of equality alienates several groups of people from accessing the library, including those in wheelchairs, people with strollers, small children, and those with other physical limitations. To make this equitable an alternative means of access to the library would be required, such as an elevator or a ramp, so that everyone has the opportunity to access the library if they choose to. This is an important consideration when looking at workplace diversity. To achieve true diversity in the workplace, employers will ultimately be faced with unique needs and barriers amongst employees. Implementing equitable hiring practices, such as blind hiring or panel hiring can help create a sense of fairness in the hiring process. Equity policies in the workplace ensure that all employees have access to the supports that they require to be successful, whether those are assistive technologies, flexible hours to accommodate childcare, provision of a company vehicle, extra training, physical assistance, or other



supports. Ensuring that everyone in the workplace is provided what they need to achieve success means better morale, job satisfaction and more effective problem solving from a diverse pool of perspectives and experiences.

Many of the individuals leaving the workforce will be in senior leadership and middle management positions, which will open new opportunities for individuals to move up in organizations provided they have acquired the necessary skills. For example, individuals with an interprovincial Red Seal who have management training and supervisory experience are excellent candidates to move into management positions. There will also be many openings for qualified trades instructors.

Take the time to explore your intended trade and some of the additional career paths that will be available to you with additional training. This can help you begin to develop ideas for your own personal learning plan. It is also important to identify any barriers that you may face during your training and what supports or strategies you will employ to overcome these. Accessing necessary supports early on in your learning will help you to achieve greater educational successes. The creation of a three- to five-year learning plan is standard practice in companies that are looking for employees to move up in the organization. It is also an activity that you can do for yourself as part of continuous learning.

## Focus On Essential Skills

The Government of Canada, along with many post-industrialized nations around the world, has invested significant time and money to conduct research and develop tools, assessments, and training supports to assist employers and employees in understanding essential skills and their importance to productivity. For example, research shows that there is a correlation between the skill levels of employees and a company's productivity. The Industry Training Authority of British Columbia cites that apprentices with the necessary essential skills for their profession are up to “eight times more likely to pass your technical exams” (see [ITA BC Essential Skills](#)).

The following nine essential skills are recognized by the Government of Canada as the foundation for learning all other skills and are integral to an employee's ability adapt to workplace change and acquire new knowledge. The nine essential skills are listed below, and a short video for each provides you with an overview of the skill.

## 1. Reading

**Reading** is the ability to understand reading materials that are in the form of sentences and paragraphs. This skill is used to scan for information, skim overall meaning, evaluate what you read, and integrate information from multiple sources.



Watch this video: [Essential Skills: Reading Text \(40 seconds\)](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=30>

### **Essential Skills: Reading Text – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Reading text is how we make meaning from paragraphs and sentences. It's how we understand instruction in the written form. Whether you closely follow written instructions or skim for reference, when you evaluate and integrate information from multiple sources, that is the ability to read text. It's recognizing specifications and regulations within journals and manuals. It's understanding instructions. Essential skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.

## 2. Writing

**Writing** is the ability to write text and documents by hand or typing or computer. This skill is used to organize, record, document, persuade, justify, or request information.



Watch this video: [Essential Skills: Writing \(35 seconds\)](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=30>

**Essential Skills: Writing – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

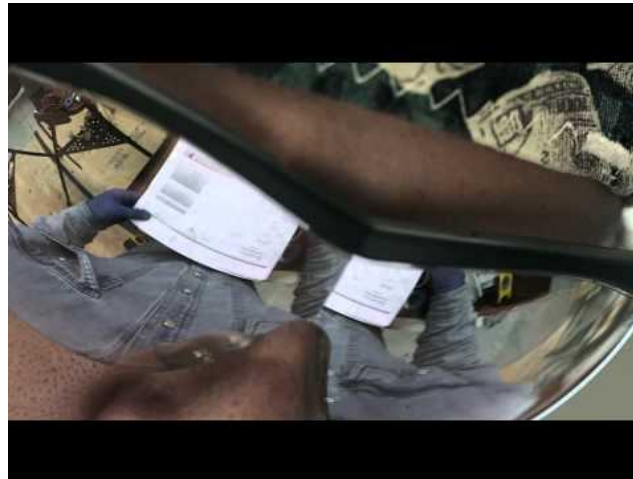
**Narrator:** Writing is how we communicate with text on paper or on screen. It organizes and documents information to persuade and inform. When you convey a message via text, write down a diagnosis on paper, make a request or provide an explanation via email, that is writing. It's projecting your message or ideas without speaking. Essentials skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.

### 3. Document Use

**Document use** is the ability to perform tasks that include words, numbers, symbols, and other visual characteristics. These items are given meaning based on their special relationship. Graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs, and labels are documents used in the world of work.



Watch this video: [Essential Skills: Document Use \(37 seconds\)](#)



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**Essential Skills: Document Use – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Document use is how a collection of displayed information is interpreted. It is the combination of words, charts, labels, and colours that we can create meaning out of. When you read or interpret graphs, that is document use. When you review blueprints and schematics, that is document use. It is how we take meaning from visual characteristics and spacial arrangements. Essentials skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.

## 4. Numeracy

**Numeracy** is the ability to use numbers and think in quantitative terms. You use this skill to do numerical estimating, money math, scheduling or budgeting math, and analyzing measurements or data.



Watch this video: [Essential Skills: Numeracy \(29 seconds\)](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=30>

**Essential Skills: Numeracy – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Numeracy is how we use numbers. It's thinking mathematically. It's thinking quantitatively. When you take a measurement, you work with numeracy. It's practical and analytical. It's fundamental, and it's highly technical. Essential skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.

## 5. Digital Skills

**Digital skills** (formerly computer use) is the ability to use different kinds of computer or smart phone applications and technical tools. This includes using cash registers, word processing software, sending emails, using social media, or modifying spreadsheets.



Watch this video: [Essential Skills: Digital \(50 seconds\)](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=30>

**Essential Skills: Digital – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Digital skills are how we work with modern technology. They are essential to use digital systems, technical tools, and applications. It's inputting data, measuring variables, and calibrating systems. It's analyzing and organizing information on digital devices. When you use a cell phone, a computer, a CNC machine. It's word processing, software, spreadsheets, email, the web. It's a vital component of communication and manufacturing. It's being able to understand and process information from digital sources. Essential skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.

## 6. Thinking

**Thinking** is the ability to process information and evaluate ideas to come to a decision. This skill is used for problem solving, making decisions, thinking critically, and planning and organizing job tasks.



Watch this video: [Essential Skills: Thinking \(35 seconds\)](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=30>

**Essential Skills: Thinking – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

Narrator: Thinking is how we evaluate ideas to make informed decisions. It's using our memories and experience to work efficiently and effectively. It's task planning, organizing, problem solving. It's rational and critical thought. It's the core of everything we do. Essential skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.

## 7. Oral Communication

**Oral communication** is the ability to use speech to give and exchange thoughts and information. You use this skill to give and exchange ideas and information and to resolve conflicts.



Watch this video: [Essential Skills: Oral Communication \(30 seconds\)](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=30>

**Essential Skills: Oral Communication – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Oral communication is how we use speech to exchange information. It's how we share ideas. It's also how we understand others. It's listening. When you greet people or take messages, that is oral communication. Essentials skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.



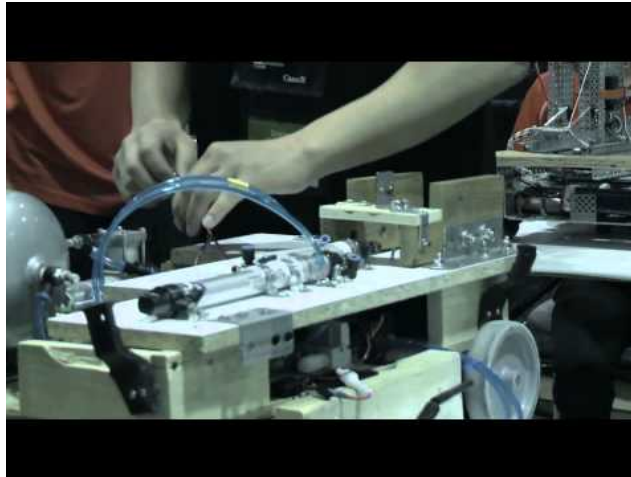
## 8. Working with Others

**Working with others** is the ability to carry out tasks as a member of a team or in a leadership or supervisory role.

Watch these videos:



[Essential Skills: Working with Others \(28 seconds\)](#)



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**Essential Skills: Working with Others – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Working with others is how we operate in a partnership or as a team. Carrying out a task together requires the engagement of all participants. Whether you are the leader or part of the team, being able to work with others is vital for getting the job done. Essentials skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.



[Working with Others: An Essential Skill \(1.5 minutes\)](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=30>

**Working with Others: An Essential Skill – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Working with others: An essential skill. What could you do today? You're full of dreams. There's no stopping you. The world is your oyster. But you can't do it alone; you need help: a whole stew of people to sweeten the pot, to stir the juices. But throw a dinner rush into the mix, and you could have a recipe for disaster. Fortunately, there are things you can do to help: Recognize strengths and attributes, identified leadership, an established workflow. Don't forget to encourage participation, because a little collaboration gets everyone on the same page. Working with others is an essential skill, and it's a learned one. Find out how you can cook up a smoother workplace to make your job easy as pie. Literacy Alberta: Essential skills for an evolving world. What could you learn today?

## 9. Continuous Learning

**Continuous learning** is the ability to participate in acquiring new skills and knowledge. This can be part of your regular work or through additional training on- or off site.



Watch this video: [Essential Skills: Continuous Learning \(36 seconds\)](#)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=30>

**Essential Skills: Continuous Learning – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Continuous learning is how we learn on the job and offsite. It is part of the regular routine, upgrading our skills as the world and technology evolves. When your coworker teaches you something new, that is continuous learning. It's using past experience to do the job better. That is continuous learning. It's how we grow. Essential skills: The foundation for work, learning, and life.

The video at the following link provides a first-hand account from two employers on the importance of essential skills to their company's success.



Watch this video: [Worth the Investment \(7 minutes\)](#)

**Worth the Investment – Transcript** (Provided for accessibility, not openly licensed.)

*[Upbeat music]*

**Narrator:** Reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills, computer use. Essential Skills: Worth the Investment.

On a country road in winter. Cambridge, Nova Scotia.

**Jack Thompson:** Dave Brown's has a fleet of 42 trucks. We have drivers on the road 24 hours, 7 days a week. To be truck driver, you have to have the three basic skills: reading, writing, and arithmetic, okay? And if you don't have that, okay, you're not going to survive in the trucking industry. You must update these essential skills, because with today's regulations, you have to write information in a book. When you're dealing with customers, you have to count freight. You have to be able to read bill *[inaudible]*, because all of that will affect what we do as a business. The new technology coming in has forced us to upgrade our fleet and our systems in order to stay competitive in the industry and maintain our market share and be profitable.

**Narrator:** Between 2004-2006, nearly 43% of private sector firms introduced improved technologies into their business.

Lettering on a building that read, "All Weather Windows." Edmonton, Alberta.

**Onkar Athwal:** We are at All Weather Windows's head office and manufacturing facility in Edmonton, Alberta. We manufacture doors and windows. One of our key objectives in moving forward as a company is to ensure that all of our employees have all of the skills necessary to preform all of their jobs at their maximum potential.

**Jason Flemming:** We have a lot of interaction with manual labour. There is no way that one is taking away from the other. And that the skills that people need, even if they are doing manual labour, it still requires them to be able to read, interpret data, use documents that have been generated through some of these processes, whether it's from our oracle systems, our ERP. And then they have to then interpret that information and then apply it what they are doing on the job.

**Onkar Athwal:** If you want to succeed in business, you have to invest in your employees. And it's not a one-time investment. It's a constant investment. And you will reap the benefits ten times over.

**Narrator:** Every 10% increase in the number of employees using computers increases productivity by 1.3%.

Letters on the side of a building that read, "Willow Printing Group." Concord, Ontario.

**Jeff Ekstein:** Digital technology and the skills that people require has impacted the print industry and our business drastically. Today, having to be literate, to be able to put the information required to keep our business running is crucial. Our number one asset is people. If we don't train them in today's standards, we will be out of business. So it's important to ensure that people understand the changes in technology and what we need to do as a company to stay ahead of the curve.

**Narrator:** In 2009, Canadians used the Internet to place orders for goods and services valued at \$15.1 billion dollars.

Outside an industrial building, CL Malach. Winnipeg, Manitoba.

**Phillip Portelance:** CL Malach is a sheet metal fabrication shop. We take raw material sheet. We can laser cut it, we can sheer punch it, we can break it, weld it, and paint it all onsite. Over the last couple years, the processes and the procedures have changed. We've had our database system to work with the equipment that we have on the plant floor. So that has changed not only some of the duties and responsibilities of specific employees, but other procedures that they need to follow, such as barcoding in and out of jobs to give us more transparency as to where a particular job is at in the plant. We know that there is a lot of employees that, over years, are able to learn how to function even if their essential skills are lacking. And they can even mask that at times. So we've been able to identify certain employees, and now we are going to provide them training that is going to help them not just here at work, but also at home. It's going to improve our bottom line, and it will allow the employees to be more successful.

**Narrator:** 89% of small and medium enterprises indicate that technological change is at the forefront of issues impacting Canada's economy in the next 10 to 20 years.

Elmsdale, Nova Scotia.

**Roy McNeill:** Don McNeil Shell is a 2nd generation service repair facility. Most of us here have a grade 12 education, and you've always been able to get through with and find your way. But things have changed so fast so rapidly. I think the biggest change is we're used to just going to the [inaudible] and saying, "Yes, that's close enough." But the specs on the newer vehicles, it's really important to know exactly what the tolerances are. So now we can go online in real time and find out exactly what they are supposed to be. We have one technician who has been here since '77. He's got over 34 years with us.

**Man with grey hair:** It's just amazing how things have changed. Years ago, I looked everything up in a book. Nowadays you have to look everything up on the computer. If I wanted to stay in this trade, I had to learn.

**Roy McNeill:** Things have changed so fast so rapidly. We have no choice. We can't ignore it.

**Narrator:** Small firms with a high level of web connectivity see their revenues rise 2.25 times faster than firms with no connectivity.

Calgary, Alberta.

**John Simpson:** Standen's Ltd is a manufacturer of alloy steel products for the automotive, heavy-truck industry. At the end of the day, if you don't work with your employees to try to help them get better at what they do, you're going to sit still, you're going to move backwards. Your competition is always trying to get better. And competition today is global, it's not local. So you have to try to improve continuously and improve throughout your organization. So giving people the skills they need to do that is critical. And having the ability to identify people who are struggling with some of the core, essential skills is equally important because if they are not able to learn the basics, how can they learn the more advanced things that you're teaching them. For our business, we find helping them with their essential skills helps us grow and be a better company.

**Roy McNeill:** Essential skills are essential to my business.

**Jack Thompson:** Digital technology in our trucks demands a skill to work for. Without it, we wouldn't be able to stay competitive.

**Jeff Ekstein:** Investment in essential skills is an investment in my business.

**Jason Flemming:** Without reading, writing, basic math skills, our employees would not be able to meet the demands of new technology.

**Phillip Portelance:** Digital technology is everywhere. We need to make sure our employees are ready.

**John Simpson:** By training our employees with essential skills, we have made sure that our company is prepared for the future of digital technology. It is absolutely worth it.

**Narrator:** To learn more about the advantages of essential and digital skills for your employees, contact the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills or visit [website that is no longer active].

## Canada’s National Occupational Analysis (NOA)

Part of the essential skills project in Canada was the creation of an essential skills profile for each occupation in Canada. The basis of the profile is Canada’s National Occupational Analysis (NOA), something that you can learn more about in Competency B-4, Describe the Apprenticeship System. The profile lists all of the major tasks performed for an occupation categorized by essential skill. It also indicates the level of complexity required to perform this task, with (1) being the most basic and (5) the most complex. To understand how levels of complexity are determined for each essential skill, visit the *Readers’ Guide to Essential Skills Profiles*.

 [Readers’ Guide to Essential Skills Profiles \[PDF\]](#)

On the following pages is an example of the essential skills profile for plumbers (National Occupational Classification #7251). Look over this document and you will notice that the level of complexity (in parentheses) for most tasks is (3) or below. This is the case for almost all occupations. You’ll also notice that the sections “Working with Others,” “Continuous Learning,” and “Impact of Digital Technologies” do not use the ranking system and instead provide a description of how each skill is used in the occupation.

Once you have had a chance to read the profile, ask yourself this question: Do you think that this information provides you with a better understanding of the essential skills you would need if you were to become a plumber?

 To look at the essential skills profiles of other occupations, visit: [Explore Careers by Essential Skills: Government of Canada Job Bank](#)

### Essential Skills Profile – Plumbers (NOC 7251)

Plumbers install, repair and maintain pipes, fixtures and other plumbing equipment used for water distribution and wastewater disposal in residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

#### Reading

- Read short text entries on forms, such as work orders and log books. (1)
- Read bulletins and notices, e.g. read bulletins to learn about changes to operating procedures and read notices to learn about product recalls. (2)
- Read workplace safety materials, e.g. read Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) to understand the chemical composition of products and possible hazards. (2)

- Read a variety of installation procedures, e.g. read manufacturers' instructions when installing new plumbing fixtures. (2)
- May read magazine and website articles to stay current on industry trends and broaden their knowledge of plumbing techniques and materials. (3)
- Read occupational health and safety standards, e.g. read rules to learn how to work safely in confined spaces. (3)
- Read a variety of manuals to learn how to install, repair and maintain plumbing fixtures and systems. (3)
- Read trade textbooks, e.g. read textbooks to understand the acceptable use of materials and science related to plumbing, such as the properties of water, metals and alloys. (4)
- Read the Canadian Plumbing Code to learn the regulations that govern the design, construction, extension, alteration, renewal or repair of plumbing systems. (4)

### Document Use

- Observe hazard and safety icons, e.g. scan icons affixed to products, such as flux-core solders, to learn about their toxic properties. (1)
- Enter and locate data, such as dates and identification numbers, in labels and tags. (1)
- Complete a variety of checklists and forms, e.g. complete hazard assessment forms and purchase orders by checking boxes and entering data, such as dates, times and quantities. (2)
- Study a variety of assembly drawings, e.g. study assembly drawings to learn how to install fixtures and appliances. (2)
- Locate data in a variety of complex tables, e.g. locate data, such as dimensions, classifications, tolerances, coefficients, identification numbers and quantities, in specification tables. (3)
- Interpret a variety of construction drawings, e.g. scan construction drawings to learn how plumbing, electrical, carpentry and mechanical installations are to coordinate. (4)
- Interpret a variety of complex schematic drawings, e.g. scan schematics to locate circuits, flows and capacities when planning for complex plumbing installations of piping. (4)

### Writing

- Write reminders and short notes to customers and co-workers, e.g. write short notes to inform supervisors about repairs in-progress and tasks to be completed. (1)
- Write short comments in forms and logbooks, e.g. write comments in order forms to specify part requirements. (1)
- May describe project details on estimate sheets and work orders, e.g. explain the plumbing tasks to be performed on job estimates. (2)
- May write reports to describe events leading up to workplace accidents, e.g. write about injuries and events when completing reports for workers' compensation boards. (2)

### Numeracy

- May receive cash, debit and credit card payments and make change. (1)
- Take a variety of measurements using basic tools, e.g. measure the lengths and diameters of pipes using tape measures. (1)
- Compare measurements to specifications, e.g. compare pressure gauge readings to required manufacturers' standards. (1)
- May approve payment for invoices submitted by suppliers, verifying the accuracy of the charges for parts ordered and received. (2)
- May schedule the completion of complex plumbing projects by considering project tasks, lead times and the availability of labour and parts. (2)
- Use formulae, e.g. use formulae to calculate the total falls on drain lines. (2)
- Calculate material requirements, e.g. calculate the amount of material, such as valves, connectors and piping, needed to complete projects. (2)
- Calculate averages from sets of readings to determine if humidity, temperature and water pressure are within levels recommended by manufacturers. (2)
- May estimate the material requirements for projects. They consider project scopes and the materials needed for similar jobs in the past. (2)
- Estimate the length of time it will take to complete projects. They consider projects and the availability of materials and labour. (2)
- May calculate amounts for estimates and invoices. They multiply hours worked by labour rates and add amounts for materials, supplies and applicable taxes. (3)
- Calculate loads, e.g. calculate the total hydraulic loads on sanitary drainage systems using Canadian Plumbing Code conversion factors and variables, such as fixture units. (3)
- Analyze multiple pressure readings to evaluate plumbing system functions and troubleshoot faults, e.g. compare measurements of pressure to calculated or predicted values at various points in a system to identify the location of leaks. (3)
- Calculate rolling offsets to design, fabricate and install piping around obstacles. (4)

### Oral Communication

- Speak with suppliers to learn about products, prices and delivery schedules. (1)
- Discuss specifications, timelines, procedures, expectations and other work-related matters with co-workers and other tradespeople, e.g. speak with forepersons about job assignments and with other tradespeople to co-ordinate activities and schedules. (2)
- May talk to customers to respond to questions and complaints, gather information about needed repairs, explain plumbing procedures and discuss the results of inspections and repairs. (2)
- Talk to building inspectors, engineers, and architects, e.g. speak with Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA) representatives about system certification requirements. (2)



- May provide detailed step-by-step instructions to apprentices, customers and other tradespeople, e.g. explain to apprentices the steps to install water heaters. (3)

### Thinking

- Encounter delays due to equipment breakdowns and shortages of materials. They inform others about the delays and perform other work until repairs are completed and needed materials arrive. (1)
- Miss deadlines when tasks extend beyond time estimates for completion. They may consult with their supervisors and customers to reschedule work and work overtime as required. (1)
- Decide order of tasks and their priorities, e.g. decide the order in which to install fixtures and test systems. (2)
- Choose tools, methods and products for plumbing installations and repairs, e.g. consider project scopes and the availability of materials and labour. (2)
- Evaluate the safety of work sites. They consider the hazards of working from heights and in confined spaces. (2)
- Evaluate the preparedness of job sites for plumbing installations. They consider the adequacy of access to work areas and protection from inclement weather. (2)
- Clarify installation procedures by referring to the Canadian Plumbing Code and job specification books and by talking to mechanical engineers, suppliers and manufacturers. (2)
- Locate information on plumbing products and fixtures by conducting Web research and by reading catalogues issued by suppliers. (2)
- Refer to schematics and speak with general contractors to locate system components, such as gas flow shut-off valves. (2)
- Refer to trade, provincial and national code books to ensure installations and repairs are compliant with industry standards for plumbing and heating systems. (2)
- Face disruptions of work schedules, timelines and budgets when project designs are found to be faulty and when specifications change after projects have already started. They assist in the development of new designs and perform other work until the project starts. (3)
- May select materials and suppliers, e.g. decide which brand and type of materials to use by considering specifications, warranties, costs and ease of use. (3)
- Assess the quality of plumbing installations and repairs. They take measurements, observe the appearance of joints and check for signs of leaks. (3)
- Plan their work in conjunction with forepersons, supervisors and other tradespeople on the job. Time pressures may become intense and interruptions from others result in frequent stops and starts. They reprioritize their tasks to accommodate emergencies and make adjustments to project timelines. Job task planning and organizing differs according to the work context.
- In the case of residential service appointments, there may be 10 to 15 service calls in one shift. Planning and organizing must take into account the distance between customer locations and the urgency of specific calls. When working on new construction projects, job

task planning and organizing is geared towards fitting smoothly into a schedule that involves other trades coming before and after them. Plumbers work both independently and in co-operation with other tradespeople on job sites. (3)

### **Digital Technology**

- Use calculators and personal digital assistant (PDA) devices to complete numeracy-related tasks, such as calculating material requirements. (1)
- May use word processing software to write letters to customers and prepare job estimates and invoices. (2)
- May use spreadsheet software to tally costs for job estimates and invoices. (2)
- May use billing and accounting software to input and track sales, produce invoices and estimates and print reports, such as income and expense statements. (2)
- May use communication software to exchange email with customers, suppliers and co-workers. (2)
- May use computer-assisted design (CAD) software to access, modify and print technical drawings. (2)
- May use databases to enter and retrieve project information. (2)
- May use databases to retrieve and print scale and assembly diagrams. (2)
- May use the Internet to access training courses and seminars offered by apprenticeship trainers, associations, unions, suppliers and employers. (2)
- May use Internet browsers and search engines to access technical service bulletins, plumbing codes, specifications and troubleshooting guides. (2)
- May use online plumbing software to streamline their scheduling, dispatching and routing activities. (2)
- May use project management software for complex equipment installations to schedule lead times and the completion of project milestones. (3)

### **Additional Information**

#### **Working with Others**

The degree to which plumbers work with others depends on the specific setting in which they work. On construction sites, plumbers must co-ordinate with other trades onsite as there is an order in which the work should be performed, and safety is always a concern. For example, during installation they complete the rough in and then return to complete the finishing after other trades (e.g., plasterers, tilesetters) have completed their work. Plumbers frequently work with an apprentice and are asked to provide mentorship to these apprentices as they continue to learn the trade. Plumbers servicing residential clients typically work with other trades to a lesser extent. They often work alone on small residential jobs, however, do engage more with their customers than those on construction sites.

## Continuous Learning

Although the fundamentals of plumbing remain constant, the nature of the plumbing occupation is changing, resulting in a corresponding need for continuous learning. For example, changes to the Canadian Plumbing Code periodically modify procedures for the installation of piping systems. Advances in technology are also having a significant impact on trade procedures. For example, the use of computer-assisted design (CAD) software is required in some jurisdictions. Advances in technology are also changing the design, applications and materials of systems. Technical courses may be offered when new products, procedures and equipment are introduced.

Apprentices learn through a combination of classroom training delivered by community colleges and on-the-job training. In unionized environments, they are paired with journeypersons according to ratios defined in collective agreements. Journeyperson upgrading programs are often offered by joint apprenticeship and training committees with a focus on both classroom and hands-on training. An increased emphasis on worker health and safety means that related training is often mandatory for both apprentices and journeypersons. Many plumbers stay current by reading trade magazines.

## Impact of Digital Technology

All essential skills are affected by the introduction of technology in the workplace. Plumbers' ability to adapt to new technologies is strongly related to their skill levels across the essential skills, including reading, writing, thinking and communication skills. Technologies are transforming the ways in which workers obtain, process and communicate information, and the types of skills needed to perform in their jobs. In particular, the use of technology, such as computer-assisted design (CAD) software for system design, layout and project management, is increasing. Self-employed plumbers may also require a broad range of computer skills to operate software applications that help them bill and communicate with customers, track costs and revenues and produce financial summaries.

Digital technologies also provide workers with tools, such as smartphones which increase opportunities for verbal interaction and text-based interaction and improve workplace safety. For example, workers working independently in remote locations can access customers, supervisors and medical assistance using their smartphones or use them to pull up reference documents for equipment.

Technology in the workplace further affects the complexity of tasks related to the essential skills required for this occupation. For example, sophisticated plumbing installations have increased the complexity of schematics and other diagrams. In contrast, electronic databases, cloud storage, USB drives and keyword search functions make it easier to find information, such as diagrams and specifications. Not only can workers complete documents (e.g., work orders) with speed and accuracy using specialized software applications that input data automatically, but they can also calculate costs, material requirements, conversions, electrical resistance, volumes, rates and offsets using Web-based applications, specialized plumbing software and hand-held devices, such as tablets and smartphones.

## How Do My Skills Measure Up?

There are many different assessments used to measure essential skills levels. Some are formal assessments that require taking a test that is marked and reviewed with you; for example, the Test of

Workplace Essential Skills, known as TOWES (see below). However, there are also many non-formal assessments that are free of charge and available for your use, some of which are computer-based assessments:

- [ITA Essential Skills](#): This website allows you to look at programs, take an assessment, and obtain a personalized learning plan based on your scores.
- [Build Your Career with Essential Skills](#): This website allows you to research occupations and assess your skills in reading, document use, and/or numeracy. At the end of the assessment, you obtain your results and a personalized learning plan to help you build your skills.
- [Essential Skills for Ontario's Tradespeople](#): This website allows you to research essential skills for 53 Red Seal trades, take online assessments, and receive a customized learning plan based on your scores.
- [Measure Up](#): SkillPlan's Measure Up site allows you to complete an informal test to assess yourself and have an idea of how your skills match up with those required for over 200 different occupations. The site also provides practice for individuals who will be completing a formalized TOWES assessment (see below) and allows you to explore careers.
- [TOWES](#): TOWES is a suite of nationally recognized assessment products that measure three essential skills: reading, using documents, and numeracy. This site provides information on preparing for TOWES, including sample questions.

## Self-Assessments

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) has developed a number of paper-based self-assessments that you can use to help understand your strengths and areas where there is need for improvement for each of the individual essential skills.

The Government of Canada updated its Essential Skills Framework at the end of June 2021. The new "Skills for Success" initiative replaces the Essential Skills model and adds two new skills: Adaptability and Creativity and Innovation; expands Problem Solving, Communication, Collaboration, and Digital; and updates Reading, Writing, and Numeracy. Details of the new program are available here: [Skills for Success](#). As such, some of the old self-assessments have been removed from the Government of Canada site, and there appears to be a mix of old and new terminology on the site. Self-tests for Computer Use, Document Use, Continuous Learning, Working with Others, and Thinking appear to have been removed from the site. The Writing, Reading and Numeracy and Oral Communication self-tests have been retained and are linked below. They reference the new Skills for Success model and indicate that updated self-assessments may be developed in the future:

- [Oral Communication Self-Assessment](#)
- [Writing Self-Assessment](#)
- [Reading Self-Assessment](#)
- [Numeracy Self-Assessment](#)

The following two tools were also made available specifically for trades, however, the term “Essential Skills” is still used and it does not reflect the ‘Skills for Success’ model:

- [Essential Skills Self-Assessment for Trades](#): This checklist will help you to identify strengths and areas for improvement in all nine essential skills.
- [Essential Skills Workbook for Trades](#): This workbook, which includes an answer guide, allows you to practice your skills with activities in areas such as reading, document use, numeracy, math, conversions, and word problems.

There is also a general page with links that has some additional self-tests from other agencies: [Skills for Success – Assessment and Training Tools](#).



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 1

1. Understanding the labour market and how employment in the workplace is changing will help you to find employment.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Over the course of your lifetime, you will most likely work for multiple employers and in a variety of different employment sectors.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. What were the three major trends affecting the labour market in Canada and British Columbia in 2015?
  - a. The ability to compete locally, a lack of employment prospects, and low wages
  - b. The ability to compete in a global market, a shortage of workers with specific credentials, and a skills gap
  - c. The ability to compete in a global market, a surplus of employment prospects for all Canadians, and a shortage of training opportunities
  - d. The lack of opportunities for new tradespeople, a surplus of workers with specific credentials, and the ability to compete in a global market
4. Most employers believe that recent graduates and potential employees have adequate essential skills.

- a. True
  - b. False
5. Insufficient essential skills cost the Canadian economy billions of dollars in gross domestic product (GDP) annually.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. Who predicts changes in the labour market?
  - a. Banks
  - b. Governments
  - c. Business associations
  - d. All of the above
7. The majority of companies in Canada are small- to medium-sized enterprises with 25 employees or less.
  - a. True
  - b. False
8. The majority of baby boomers will retire by 2030, and this will create significant opportunities for new employees with the desired skills and qualifications.
  - a. True
  - b. False
9. Research does not show a direct correlation between the essential skill levels of employees and a company's productivity.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. Apprentices with the necessary essential skills for their profession are up to eight times more likely to pass their exams.
  - a. True
  - b. False
11. Essential skills are the foundation for learning all other skills.
  - a. True
  - b. False
12. Which of the nine essential skills is missing from this list?
  - reading
  - numeracy
  - writing
  - digital skills

- thinking
  - oral communications
  - working with others
  - continuous learning
- a. Listening
  - b. Working alone
  - c. Computer skills
  - d. Document use
13. The Canadian government has prepared detailed essential skills profiles for almost every trade and occupation, and this information is available on the Web.
- a. True
  - b. False
14. There are numerous free self-assessment tools available on the Internet (Web based and paper based) to help you understand your essential skills levels and how you can improve them.
- a. True
  - b. False
15. Giving each person the support they require to be successful is:
- a. Equity
  - b. Equality
16. Giving everyone the same thing regardless of their needs is:
- a. Equity
  - b. Equality
17. The increased discrimination of people that identify with multiple underrepresented groups is often referred to as:
- a. Racism
  - b. Bipartisanism
  - c. Intersectionality
  - d. Equality
18. Women represent more than 50% of Canada's population, but only \_\_\_\_ % of Canada's skilled trades workforce.
- a. 5%
  - b. 20%
  - c. 40%
  - d. 70%
19. Which of the following is/are reason(s) that Indigenous peoples tend not to pursue a career in the

skilled trades?

- a. Barriers to access of shop classes
  - b. Lack of mentorship by Indigenous journeypersons
  - c. Unwelcoming institutions and workplaces
  - d. All of the above
20. It is important to assess any extra support you will need with your education prior to the start of your studies.
- a. True
  - b. False

See the [Answer Key](#) in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 2: Employer Expectations and Job Satisfaction

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



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As a new employee, you need to know what your employer's expectations at work are. A large part of these expectations should be provided to you as part of the interview process, whether it is through the questions your employer asks or information that is conveyed directly to you. During the interview, be sure to jot down any questions you may have for your employer regarding expectations and remember to ask them at the end of your interview. This will allow you to make an informed decision about working for the company if you are offered a position.

Once you arrive at your new job, your employer or another employee of the company should put you through an orientation process. If it is a large company, you may be one of several people in this process, or in a smaller organization it could be as simple as a one-on-one conversation with your supervisor that may be supplemented by written information. Again, be sure to keep track of any questions you may have and ask them at the appropriate time, and always ask where you should go if you have additional questions following the orientation.

Knowing what is expected of you and who you should turn to for additional information will help reduce stress and allow you to be a more effective worker.

Additional employer expectations may also be conveyed at any point during your employment (e.g., when a new manager or supervisor is hired), so it is important to pay attention and ask for clarification as required.

### What Employers Want in an Employee

Employers want individuals who have the necessary skills to perform the job and be able to adapt to changes in the workplace. This includes both hard and soft skills.

Hard skills are credentials and other skills that you have mastered. These include diplomas, certificates, and/or credentials that attest to your competencies and ability to perform certain tasks, such as a Red Seal in carpentry, a WMHIS certificate, a FOODSAFE Level 1 certificate, or a certificate of qualification for Steamfitter Level 1. Hard skills also include skills for which you may not have a

formal certificate but have reached a level of competency, such as working knowledge of a foreign language or Microsoft Office.

Soft skills are your “people skills” and include attributes such as being:

- dependable and punctual (showing up on time and ready to work and not being a liability)
- self-motivated
- enthusiastic (having a positive impact that enhances the organization)
- committed
- willing to learn (lifelong learner)
- able to accept constructive criticism
- a good problem solver
- strong in customer service skills
- adaptable (willing to change and take on new challenges)
- a team player
- positive in attitude
- strong in communication skills
- good in essential work skills (following instructions, demonstrating critical thinking skills, knowing limits)
- ethical
- safety conscious
- honest
- strong in time management

## **What Workers Expect from Their Employers**

Employees want many of the same things as their employers, including:

- respect in the workplace
- equal treatment (adhering to anti-discrimination laws that prohibit unfair employment practices based on factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion)
- a safe work environment
- communication (about the company, their team, their performance)
- recognition (tangible and non-tangible)
- recognition that there is life outside of work (boundaries)
- problems being handled efficiently and effectively

- good salary and benefits (if applicable)
- parental benefits (if applicable)
- flexible schedules (for those with families to accommodate childcare needs)
- continued learning and education on new technologies.

Younger workers and graduates also have a greater concern for:

- work-life balance
- flexibility (telecommuting, techno-savvy)
- being more entrepreneurial (self-starters; starting their own businesses and working as a subcontractor rather than an employee)
- flexibility as a sign of success, not just salary
- more meaningful work that leverages their strengths

The ability of employers to accommodate some of these expectations is also tied to the individual occupation and whether greater flexibility is feasible. For example, working from home and setting your own hours is not feasible for a carpenter on a large construction site, but it may be feasible for an electrician to work as a subcontractor in the evenings for a small company that provides service to residential clients.

## Meeting Expectations

During your interview and again after you are hired, your employer will go through the expectations for the job, and it is important that you meet these expectations once you begin to work.

Communication is central to meeting expectations, on the part of both the employer and the employee. It is important to be an active listener, ask questions when you are unsure, and be proactive when you need more information. In small companies, you may be dealing with only one or two people. In larger companies, you may be provided with written information regarding policies, procedures, and workplace orientations, and you may be dealing with several different people or departments. For example, you may have to interact with your direct supervisor, human resources, the environmental safety officer, and your union shop steward.

## Punctuality and attendance

Being punctual and showing up for work are not optional. Failing to show up where and when expected is one of the easiest ways for your supervisor and co-workers to lose confidence in your abilities. They rely on you to be at work or on a job site, and your absence can adversely affect the company in several ways: for example, not meeting schedules, additional financial costs, increasing the workload of your co-workers, and damaging a relationship with a client who expects a job to be completed. For an employee, being late or not showing up can also result in a loss of wages, a verbal or written warning from the supervisor, not passing probation, negative feedback on job evaluations, lack of promotions or raises, or the loss of a job.

It is important that you keep to the work schedule assigned. Whenever possible, provide your employer with sufficient notice if you need to take time off or if there are any issues that could affect your work schedule. For example, if a health or family issue requires you to take a few days off or make you late, discuss the situation with your supervisor to see if a solution can be found. If an absence or lateness can't be avoided, make sure that you communicate with your supervisor and co-workers as soon as possible so that they know that you are delayed and are on your way or that you will be absent.

### **Time management**

Conducting personal business and wasting time during working hours costs an employer time and money. Try to adhere to your lunch hours and breaks at all times. Keep up to date with your schedule and the activities that you should be accomplishing during your workday. If you need help, use a smart phone application or a handwritten schedule to keep track of your time and commitments.

### **Work ethic**

Doing the job right means doing it correctly, working neatly, handling equipment and materials properly, and working safely. When a job is done correctly it will look good and function well for many years and be a testament to your skills and work ethic. It can also help build the reputation of a company and attract new and repeat clients. A job done wrong costs an employer money to redo it, can lead to significant delays in schedule, be a source of conflict with clients, and be detrimental to a company's ability to attract new customers.

A neat and organized job site pleases both customers and employers. If you are working for a client, it is important to demonstrate respect for their workplace and possessions. Keeping a neat worksite provides them with a level of confidence regarding your personal work habits and also reduces the risk of accident.

Proper handling and use of equipment and materials is also integral to performing the job right. If you are using a new piece of equipment or new materials, do your homework. Read up on how to use these items and discuss it with your supervisor. Proper usage of equipment reduces the chance of injury and minimizes waste. Knowing how to use new materials eliminates waste and ensures that the materials are installed according to manufacturer specifications.

Finally, safety on the job site is a top priority for all employers. Following workplace safety regulations and rules increases not only your safety but also that of your co-workers. It is important to be proactive and know where all of the safety features are at a job site, such as fire extinguishers, fire exits, and first aid kits. It is also important to wear all required PPE, and exchange damaged or improperly fitting PPE for new or properly fitting PPE. It is important to acknowledge that safety on the job is not just limited to physical safety; psychological safety is also a consideration for workers due to bullying and harassment if you witness or are the target of bullying or harassment it is important to speak up. If you see an unsafe condition or a safety violation, you can prevent accidents by doing something about it immediately. If you find a safety hazard, take action in one or more of the following ways:

- Follow the established procedures or protocols set by your company.
- Try to correct the unsafe condition.

- Warn others.
- Inform your supervisor.
- Inform those who caused the safety violation.
- Inform the safety officer or repair staff.
- Check that the violation has been corrected.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 2

1. Where do most employers convey their expectations of potential employees?
  - a. On their website
  - b. In the job posting
  - c. In the interview process
  - d. In their employee handbook
2. Employers want individuals with the skills to perform the job now and adapt to changes in the future.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Which of the following is not a hard skill?
  - a. Having FOODSAFE Level 1 certificate
  - b. Being fluently bilingual (English-French)
  - c. The ability to work well under pressure
  - d. Having the Red Seal endorsement in carpentry
4. Which of the following is not a soft skill?
  - a. Enthusiasm
  - b. Being a lifelong learner
  - c. Being fluently bilingual (English-French)
  - d. The ability to work well under pressure
5. Employee expectations are very different from employer expectations.

- a. True
  - b. False
6. Which of the following concerns is most expressed by recent graduates and younger workers?
- a. Good salaries and benefits
  - b. Respect in the workplace and recognition
  - c. Equal treatment and a safe working environment
  - d. Increased flexibility, entrepreneurship, and work-life balance
7. Communication is central to meeting expectations on the part of the employer and employee.
- a. True
  - b. False
8. Which of the following do employers expect from their workers?
- a. Effective time management
  - b. Strong work ethic, punctuality, and attendance
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
9. Which of the following does a strong work ethic not include?
- a. Safety on the job site
  - b. A neat and organized job site
  - c. Ability to determine your working hours
  - d. Proper handling and use of equipment and materials
10. Bullying and harassment is a safety issue on the job site that should be reported immediately.
- a. True
  - b. False

See the [Answer Key](#) in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 3: Respect in the Workplace

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



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### Contributing to A Respectful Workplace

All workers are responsible for their own conduct and ensuring that they maintain a respectful workplace. Employers are responsible for ensuring that they take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of their workers in a workplace that is free from bullying and harassment. Employers that indenture apprentices are also responsible for ensuring that their apprentices are provided learning opportunities to continue their growth in their field.

Workers also have a responsibility to others in keeping the workplace respectful. This means that as workers if you witness inappropriate behaviors towards others, you need to know how to intervene to create a safe space for your co-workers. This is often referred to as “being more than a bystander,” a bystander is someone who stands by and watches as things unfold. The consequences of being a bystander can be potentially detrimental to someone physically or psychologically. Imagine this; you witness a serious car accident, but rather than calling 911 and getting help for those involved, you watch the situation unfold and maybe even take a picture. The consequences in this example are quite obvious, however in some cases where they may not be as blatant, it is still important to consider the impact on those involved. The act of being more than a bystander is intervening in a way that either diffuses the situation or helps to remove the target of the inappropriate behaviour from the situation. These situations can vary from physical threats, to harassment, to racist or sexist comments or more.

Interventions can be achieved in a number of different ways including:

- **Taking the attention off the target**, changing the topic of conversation or the art of distraction can often quickly shift focus from the target to something else.
- **Confronting the behavior**, directly engaging with the person participating in the inappropriate behavior when safe to do so, can shut down further harm and show that you find this behavior to be unacceptable in the workplace.
- **Finding assistance to intervene**, if you don’t feel as though there is a safe way to do either of the above options, or you are not comfortable stepping in, this is a way to still make a difference. By engaging with a supervisor, a peer, or an authority figure for assistance, you

can still help to diffuse the situation and ensure the safety of your co-worker. **Remember safety does not just apply to physical harm, but also psychological harm.**

Larger companies and governmental organizations will normally have new employee orientations (in person or online) as well as employee manuals or specific codes of conduct regarding what is expected in the workplace. Smaller companies may not have these formalized tools, but they are still subject to the same federal and provincial legislation put in place to ensure respect in the workplace. Individuals who violate these laws may be subject to discipline by their employer, up to and including termination of employment, and/or legal prosecution.

## Unconscious Bias

In creating a respectful workplace, we must consider things that may affect our ability to engage with our co-workers in a respectful manner. One of the most impactful driving forces in our interactions with others is something called unconscious bias. Unconscious bias is a preconceived notion that we may form about a group of people or a person without consciously recognizing it, this notion can be either positive or negative but typically is negative. These quick conclusions formed in our brains automatically are formed out of personal experiences and background. These prejudices or stereotypes can impact the way we interact and navigate personal communications with people. In order to create a respectful and inclusive workplace we must learn to recognize our own unconscious biases and question as to what impact they will have in our responses to others and situations. It is important to pause and reflect on your unconscious biases before interacting with others.

## Examples

A respectful workplace is a place where employees are:

- considerate of one another
- inclusive of other individuals or groups regardless of differences in background, gender, culture, strengths, or opinions
- not subjected to disrespectful, discriminating, bullying, or harassing behaviour
- supported by their employer/management team to resolve disputes

The following behaviours and attitudes are not acceptable:

- **Personal harassment** is considered any behaviour by a person directed against another person that a reasonable person would consider offensive, humiliating, or intimidating. Examples include making derogatory comments, swearing, yelling, inappropriately interfering in another person's work, derogatory gestures, inappropriate practical jokes, ridicule, gossip, reckless disregard or denial of another's rights, improper use of power or authority, or physical assault.
- **Bullying** is a repeated or systematic behaviour—physical, verbal, or psychological—that is intended to belittle, intimidate, coerce, or isolate another person.

- **Discrimination** is unfair differential treatment of an individual or group based on race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, or unrelated criminal conviction.
- **Discriminatory harassment** is abusive, unfair, offensive, or demeaning treatment of a person or group that interferes with work or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive workplace.
- **Gender-based harassment** is any behaviour that polices and reinforces traditional heterosexual gender norms, this can include harassment for gender non-conformity.
- **Sexual harassment** is conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or unwelcome. This can include, but is not limited to unwanted remarks, behaviours, or communications of a sexual nature. Sexual solicitations, advances, suggestive comments, gestures, songs, and chants. The inappropriate display of sexually suggestive or sexualized pictures, posters objects or graffiti. Non-consensual sharing of explicit, sexual, or sexualized pictures, video, or other media on the internet or otherwise. Sexual comments or slurs on social media platforms. Expressions of gender bias that may include remarks that discriminate, denigrate and/or create a toxic learning environment. And sexual or sexualized content that interferes with a person's dignity or privacy such as voyeurism or exhibitionism.
- **Sexual Assault** is any form of sexual contact without consent.

## Legislation

The following legislation governs acceptable behaviour.

- [Workers Compensation Act](#): The Workers Compensation Act outlines the general duties for employers, workers, and supervisors. In the case of bullying or harassment in the workplace, an employer is required to take all reasonable steps necessary to address complaints. If the issue is not handled at the workplace, a formal complaint can be submitted to WorkSafeBC.
- [Human Rights Code](#): The Human Rights Code of British Columbia is intended to address all issues of discrimination that prevent full and free participation in economic, social, political, and cultural life in BC.
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#): The Charter recognizes primary fundamental freedoms, democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, and equality rights and recognizes the multicultural heritage of Canadians.
- [Civil Rights Protection Act](#): This Act addresses conduct and communication that promotes hatred or contempt or superiority/inferiority based on colour, race, religion, ethnic origin, or place of origin.
- [Multiculturalism Act](#): This Act recognizes diversity as a fundamental characteristic of society in which there are no impediments to full and free participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of British Columbia.
- [Criminal Code of Canada Consolidated Statutes and Regulations](#): This section of federal legislation defines criminal harassment, prohibited conduct, and punishment.

## Guidelines for Your Own Behaviour

To ensure that your behaviour promotes a respectful workplace, consider the following:

- Before acting, consider the impact of your words or actions on others. How would it feel to be on the receiving end?
- Know your unconscious biases and be aware of how they influence your decision making.
- Recognize and respect the differences of your co-workers.
- Monitor your communications: verbal, written, body language, and listening.
- Gain a better understanding of yourself and the triggers that set you off. This will allow you to better control your reactions and act appropriately instead of in haste or anger.
- Take responsibility for your actions and be proactive in resolving conflict with your employer or co-workers.
- Base your decisions on facts rather than assumptions.
- Remember that you are not at the centre of all activities and look at the bigger picture.
- Don't sit on the sidelines when you fear or see a co-worker being harassed or bullied. Complacency allows inappropriate behaviour to continue and escalate and can cause lasting physical or psychological harm.
- If you encounter a problem in the workplace, be proactive in resolving it in an appropriate way. WorkSafeBC's *Toward a respectful workplace: A handbook on preventing and addressing workplace bullying and harassment* is a thorough overview on this topic and provides examples of how to foster a respectful workplace.



[Toward a Respectful Workplace: A Handbook on Preventing and Addressing Workplace Bullying and Harassment](#)



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

### Self-Test

#### Self-Test 3

1. All individuals are responsible for their own conduct and ensuring that they maintain a respectful workplace.
  - a. True

- b. False
2. It is not the responsibility of the employer to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to ensure health and safety in the workplace.
    - a. True
    - b. False
  3. It is not the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the workplace is free from bullying and harassment.
    - a. True
    - b. False
  4. What is included in a respectful workplace?
    - a. Inappropriate behaviour is not addressed.
    - b. No jokes are made and everyone is very serious.
    - c. Friendships between employees are discouraged.
    - d. Individuals are considerate, inclusive, and supportive of one another.
  5. When is a joke not a joke?
    - a. When it is inappropriate and doesn't belong in a workplace.
    - b. When it is hurtful or derogatory to another individual or group of individuals.
    - c. All of the above
    - d. None of the above
  6. How do you promote a respectful workplace?
    - a. Keep to yourself and don't cause any problems.
    - b. If you see or hear something that is inappropriate, forget about it.
    - c. Consider the impact of words or actions and how they affect others.
    - d. Monitor and report on other people's communications and behaviours.
  7. Which of the following is/are way(s) to be more than a bystander?
    - a. Taking attention off the target
    - b. Confronting the behaviour
    - c. Finding assistance to intervene
    - d. All of the above
  8. Sexual harassment is any conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted or unwelcome.
    - a. True
    - b. False

9. Unconscious bias is a preconceived notion that we may form about a group of people or a person that we consciously realize we have.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. Gender-based harassment is any behaviour that
  - a. Polices women's bodies
  - b. Polices and reinforces traditional heterosexual gender norms
  - c. Is overt and obvious to all employees of a company
  - d. Only negatively impacts female employees

See the [Answer Key](#) in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 4: Maintain Relations

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



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Working with others is an essential skill and integral to almost every job. The individuals you work with may be your co-workers, customers, or a combination of the two. If you remember to always treat people with respect and in the manner that you wish to be treated, you should be able to deal effectively with customer and co-worker relations. If relationships are new, it is always important to take the time to slowly build that relationship, whether it is face to face or online.

It is much better to take a more conservative approach when establishing new relationships in the workplace than to be too familiar with a stranger. If you are working in a team environment, learning to understand the synergy of the group is important, as is ensuring that your group environment is welcoming to new staff members, visitors, and clients.

Workplaces benefit from cohesive working environments fostered by good employee relations. When employees treat each other with respect, communicate with each other effectively, work together as a team and appreciate the contributions of their colleagues, productivity and job satisfaction are increased as a result. Inclusion of others in the workplace helps to make everyone feel like part of the team. Sometimes we may not know how to include a new co-worker, especially if we perceive they are different than us, this is likely because of our unconscious biases. Recognizing these biases, our privilege and any power dynamics that may be present, along with practicing inclusive behaviours goes a long way in developing good working relationships. Some examples of inclusive behaviours are greeting others genuinely, employing good listening skills, speaking up if someone is being excluded, recognizing, and addressing misunderstandings, engaging positively with other people's ideas and feelings and validating other's concerns. Focusing on cultivating and maintaining a good workplace dynamic is important to everyone's success.

### Co-worker Relationships

Effective co-worker relationships are built on respect and understanding. The following are just a few tips on how to develop and maintain healthy relationships in the workplace:

- Practice common courtesy and treat others as you like to be treated. Be honest, make eye

contact with your co-workers, and exchange greetings.

- Use effective communications: verbal, written, aural, and physical (body language).
- Be observant. If you feel that something is wrong, follow up with the individual or group.
- Be respectful of other people's time.
- Be proactive in asking for help from your colleagues when necessary.
- Use social media with caution. Don't mention issues related to work, your employer, or co-workers on the Internet. These messages can go viral, be taken out of context, and have serious long-term repercussions.
- Remember to keep work and home life separate. Your relationship with co-workers must remain professional and beyond reproach, even if you are friends outside of work.
- Have a positive attitude and don't complain about work to your colleagues. It can have a negative effect on the entire office and contribute to poor morale.
- Be welcoming to new employees, management, and visitors.
- Be inclusive with co-workers, isolating or excluding others can result in a toxic work environment.
- Check your unconscious biases when interacting with others, don't let prejudices or stereotypes guide your interactions with others.
- Own your mistakes. For example, if a complaint is made about your behaviour and you believe that it is justified, apologize and work at correcting the problem so it doesn't reoccur. If you believe a complaint is unfair, be polite and attempt to deal with the misunderstanding that arose between you and your co-worker. Try to close the matter in a way that allows you to remain on good terms and thank the individual for discussing the matter with you.
- Touch base with your co-workers on a regular basis.
- Understand the hierarchy within your organization and how to communicate with the different levels. For example, follow the chain of command in reporting on an issue and respect seniority.

## Client/Customer Relationships

The amount of interaction you have with clients or customers may vary significantly depending on your job. If you maintain respectful communication on the job site, it will go a long way to ensuring that your behaviour is appropriate for co-workers, supervisors, and clients who may be on site.

When dealing with clients, always follow these guidelines:

- Be patient in developing relationships with new or potential clients.
- Act professionally.
- Dress appropriately and maintain a good appearance.
- Be respectful with clients at all times. This includes respecting lifestyles that may be different



from your own.

- Don't make assumptions about clients or the work that they would like completed.
- Be an active listener and treat your clients as you would like to be treated.
- Respond to client questions quickly, be it by returning phone messages, meeting with the client in person, or email.
- Never make promises that you can't keep.
- Work within your area of authority. If discussing work with clients is outside of your area of responsibility, make sure you put them in touch with your supervisor.
- Document all client requests even if they are very simple. If a client wants to meet or speak to your supervisor, call your supervisor and leave a message or take a note to them. Always follow up on the notes that you take and the status. To ensure that you don't lose your notes, get into the habit of carrying a small notebook in your pocket or use a similar application on your smart phone. Always remember to follow up with your notes and cross out items when you have completed them.
- If you are responsible for dealing directly with client requests, document the requests. You may do this by having a client complete a standard form or agreement or by emailing a client after a discussion and asking the client to confirm your message. If changes are later made to the scope of work, be sure they are signed off by both the contractor and the client before the work begins.
- Work with integrity. If you've made a mistake, acknowledge it and work with your employer and/or the client to resolve the issue.
- If a customer has a complaint, address it without delay. This does not mean you have to provide a solution immediately, since there may be additional information required or you may have to move the complaint forward to a supervisor or other individual. But you should let the customer know that the complaint is being dealt with promptly.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 4

1. Working with others is an essential skill and is integral to almost every job.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Healthy working relationships and teams have no impact on productivity.

- a. True
  - b. False
3. Relationships and trust between co-workers and clients are built over time.
- a. True
  - b. False
4. What are relationships with co-workers built upon?
- a. Common objectives
  - b. Conflict and resolution
  - c. Respect and understanding
  - d. Common interests and backgrounds
5. Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) can have an impact on your career and should be used with caution.
- a. True
  - b. False
6. What does “owning your own mistake” not include?
- a. Taking sole responsibility for a decision made by a colleague or team
  - b. Recognizing when you have made an error and informing your superior
  - c. Inadvertently saying something inappropriate or hurting someone’s feelings and apologizing
  - d. Acknowledging the mistake and thinking of how the situation could have been handled better in the future
7. The style of communication used should be the same for all individuals in a company, regardless of their title or position.
- a. True
  - b. False
8. How should communication with your clients be conducted?
- a. Friendly and similar to that of fellow employees
  - b. Minimal unless otherwise directed by your supervisor
  - c. Mindful of the business relationship and respectful at all times
  - d. Directed specifically to work and areas where you have responsibility
9. How should customer requests and complaints be handled?
- a. Acted upon immediately
  - b. Directed immediately to your supervisor

- c. Listened to and fully researched before bringing them forward to a superior
  - d. Listened to, documented, and brought forward to the appropriate individual according to company policy and procedures
10. Greeting others genuinely, employing good listening skills, speaking up if someone is being excluded, recognizing, and addressing misunderstandings, engaging positively with other people's ideas and feelings and validating other's concerns, are all examples of \_\_\_\_\_ behaviours:
- a. Harassment
  - b. Bystander
  - c. Inclusive
  - d. Exclusive

See the [Answer Key](#) in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 5: Stress Management Techniques

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



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Stress is the emotional or physical reaction to pressure, demands, or change. It is an everyday part of both work and home life. Working in skilled trades can be stressful because of the long work hours, exposure to new job sites, dealing with new co-workers and clients, working in confined spaces that may be noisy and physically demanding, responding to challenging assignments, and meeting tight deadlines. Being able to manage your stress level is integral to your growth as a human being and as a skilled and competent employee and co-worker.

### Managing Stress

Here are some tips to help you manage your stress levels at work:

- Remember that stress is a part of normal life, provided it is managed.
- Everyone handles stress differently and has a different threshold of stress that they can tolerate. Just because a colleague doesn't handle stress in the same way as you does not mean that they are not under stress.
- Being prepared can help reduce your level of stress. Plan your day; show up at the job site early and ready to perform. Make sure that you complete any pre-work or reading that is required before starting a job.
- Ask any questions you may have about a specific task before starting on a job or assignment.
- When on the job, focus on the task at hand. At the end of the day, make sure your job site is clean and organized so you'll be ready for the next day. If you work in multiple locations, make sure that you know your schedule for the next day so that you can plan your travel time accordingly.
- Know where the stress is coming from. If your personal life is causing additional stress in the workplace, acknowledge and address the issue. As much as possible, personal life should remain out of the workplace; however, this isn't always possible. Being preoccupied or acting out on the job site can increase the risk of workplace accidents and be hazardous to both you and your colleagues. If you are unable to manage your personal stress, seek the necessary

help (for example, visit your doctor).

- If the stress is related to working conditions, be assertive and discuss the issues with the appropriate individual, be it a colleague, your team, or your supervisor. Once the issue is out in the open and discussed and reconciled in a respectful manner, it should help to reduce the stress level of all individuals involved.
- If you cannot reduce your stress, it is important to recognize when it reaches an unhealthy level and take the necessary steps to get the assistance you need. Don't wait until an incident occurs before addressing this issue.
- Many unions, schools and other organizations have specific supports in place for employees struggling with stress, anxiety, addictions, or mental health issues. Don't be ashamed to seek help, these supports are often free to employees and are confidential in nature. Many employers understand that the wellness of their employees directly correlates to their ability to perform in their job.

### **Signs of unhealthy stress levels**

Too much stress is damaging to your health and well-being. It can also increase the stress levels of your co-workers, family, or friends. Very high levels of stress can affect you physically, mentally, or emotionally and have devastating consequences. Learning to identify the signs of unhealthy levels of stress in yourself or your colleagues is important. Some of these signs include:

- significant changes in personality noticed by co-workers, family, or friends
- emotional changes such as feeling sad, guilty, depressed, anxious, afraid, or tense, or displaying frequent mood swings
- behaviour changes such as crying often, withdrawing from others, becoming angry or aggressive, losing your temper easily
- fatigue, insomnia, or restlessness
- changes in sleep patterns
- misusing alcohol, drugs (including prescription drugs), or food
- inability to concentrate or make decisions
- digestive problems such as ulcers, stomach cramps, heartburn, diarrhea
- headaches
- nervous habits such as nail biting or teeth grinding
- loss of hair
- skin rashes
- increased perspiration and dizziness, or cold hands and feet

If you are experiencing a number of these issues, make an appointment with a trained professional who can help you deal with the issue.

## Reducing stress

To reduce your stress, you first need to know the acceptable level under which you can personally function. Some people thrive in high-pressure situations and may perform at their best under these conditions. Others require minimal stress and consistency to perform effectively.

Once you have determined the level acceptable for you, look at ways to reduce stress both at home and in the workplace. It is inevitable that unhealthy levels of stress will be carried from home to and from work if you don't look for holistic solutions. For example, if you are fatigued on the job site, it's important to reduce activities outside of work and try to rest more and catch up on missed sleep.

The following are some tips on how you can reduce stress in your life:

- Set aside time each day to relax and enjoy leisure activities.
- Take care of your body by exercising at least three times a week and eating right. Keep junk food to a minimum and try to keep body weight in line with Health Canada's recommendations for a healthy weight.
- Do not abuse alcohol or drugs, including prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
- Visit your doctor and dentist regularly and address any issues promptly as they arise.
- Visit a qualified counsellor or other mental health practitioner to help you navigate your stress and anxiety in a healthy way.
- Get adequate sleep each day.
- Continue to do activities that you enjoy.
- Try to find some down time each day when you can be alone and away from the demands of work and others.
- Make decisions promptly and then own them. Don't worry about second guessing yourself.
- Take responsibility for making your job and workplace enjoyable. Keep a positive attitude and bring humour into your life.
- Share your feelings rather than bottling them up.
- Get involved in community activities.
- Learn how to use relaxation techniques such as meditation or deep breathing to reduce stress.

## Dealing with Overwork

If you find yourself constantly working beyond your capacity, it is time to take a look at how you work to see if there is any room for improvement. Ask yourself the following questions, and answer them truthfully:

- Am I making the best use of my time while at work? Are there areas in which I can improve; for example, making sure to stay within the approved lunch and break periods and spending less time talking to friends while on the job site?

- Are there areas where training would help me improve my performance and work more efficiently? If so, what are they? Can my supervisor/journeyperson help me to acquire these skills, or do I need to get formal training or practice on my own time?
- Are there workplace solutions that can help me improve my performance? For example, could I reorganize my tools and supplies at the job site to make them more readily accessible and easier to locate?

If you've examined your own working style, made improvements, and still cannot complete all of the work required within a workday, it may be time to discuss this issue further with your supervisor, as additional staff may be needed at critical points in the project.

Another area of overwork is working overtime. Most jobs have specific deadlines by which a task has to be completed, be it an office building under construction or the retrofit of a ship. Depending on the size and availability of the skilled workforce, working overtime may be an expectation of the employer on some job sites or projects. The issue will usually be brought up at the time of employment or at the start of a new project. If you are a unionized employee, there will be specific regulations covering overtime in your collective agreement. Individuals who are not unionized may also have company guidelines that explain overtime conditions and benefits that adhere to labour laws. In the absence of documents, the existing labour laws always take precedence. Working overtime on a regular basis can be very stressful, so it is important to factor this in when taking steps to reduce your stress level. For example, you may need to engage in fewer external activities, and be sure to get enough sleep, eat right, and exercise.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 5

1. Stress is not a part of normal life and should be addressed immediately.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Stress is emotional or physical tension resulting from difficult circumstances.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Which of the following can cause stress?
  - a. Working in confined spaces or noisy and physically demanding situations
  - b. Working on new job sites with new clients and co-workers, or working overtime



- c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
4. Being prepared can help you reduce your level of stress.
- a. True
  - b. False
5. The job site, co-workers, and clients are always the source of your stress.
- a. True
  - b. False
6. Being preoccupied or acting out on the job site can increase the risk of workplace accidents and be hazardous to you and your colleagues.
- a. True
  - b. False
7. How can you reduce stress related to your working conditions?
- a. Visit your doctor and ask for a medical leave of absence.
  - b. Try to resolve it on your own without impacting your co-workers.
  - c. Be assertive and discuss the issues with the appropriate individual(s).
  - d. Keep a list of all of the things that occur on the job site that cause you and your colleagues stress.
8. Too much stress is damaging to your health and well-being.
- a. True
  - b. False
9. What are some of the signs that a person has an unhealthy stress level?
- a. Fatigue, insomnia, or restlessness, and misusing alcohol, drugs, or food
  - b. Significant changes in personality, inability to concentrate and make decisions, behavioural changes, or frequent mood swings
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
10. What should you do if you have an unhealthy stress level?
- a. Discuss it with your supervisor.
  - b. Discuss it with your friends and colleagues.
  - c. Keep it a secret from your colleagues and supervisor.
  - d. Seek help from a trained professional and get the help you need.

11. The level of stress that can be handled by an individual differs from person to person.
  - a. True
  - b. False
12. It is important to think about the level of stress you can handle when choosing a career.
  - a. True
  - b. False
13. Which of the following is not an effective way to reduce stress?
  - a. Exercise and eat right.
  - b. Go to the bar and drink.
  - c. Make sure you sleep an adequate amount of time each day.
  - d. Be assertive and deal with issues as they arise rather keeping them inside.
14. What should you do first if you are unable to keep up with your daily workload?
  - a. Advise your supervisor that the workload is excessive.
  - b. Discuss it with your friends and see if they have the same complaints.
  - c. Gauge your performance on what other people are able to accomplish.
  - d. Look at how you work and determine if there is room for improvement or increased efficiency.
15. Depending on your trade, employer, and job site, working overtime may be expected of employees.
  - a. True
  - b. False
16. The issue of overtime is rarely addressed by a prospective employer in interviews.
  - a. True
  - b. False
17. Both labour laws and collective agreements for unionized employees address overtime.
  - a. True
  - b. False
18. A(n) or mental health practitioner to help you navigate your stress and anxiety in a healthy way.
  - a. Qualified counselor
  - b. Close friend
  - c. Instructor
  - d. Online blog

19. Many unions, schools and other organizations have specific supports in place for employees struggling with stress, anxiety, addictions, or mental health issues.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
20. Reorganizing tools and supplies at the job site to make things more readily available and easier to access is an example of a workplace solution to help improve performance.
  - a. True
  - b. False

See the [Answer Key](#) in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 6: Effective Problem Solving

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



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Effective problem solving is part of everyday life, whether at home or work. While the complexity of problems may increase as you rise in management or leadership positions, everyone in the workforce makes decisions on a daily basis.

### Problem Solving

Here are some basic guidelines for solving problems:

- First identify the issue. If you are working as part of a group, keep in mind that there may be some differences of opinion about the problem. It is important to take the time to actively listen to individuals to ensure that the solution takes into account all opinions voiced.
- If you are trying to solve a problem alone, carefully consider all possible options based on experience. If you are struggling to come up with a solution to a particularly challenging problem or something you are lacking in experience with, reach out to someone for assistance.
- Look for solutions to the problem. Explore a variety of solutions and the strengths and weaknesses of each. Be cautious not to overcomplicate the solution, this can generate more problems, particularly in execution.
- Determine how the decision will be made. Will it be made by consensus? By majority rule? Or by submitting a recommendation to superiors for review and a decision?
- Determine how the solution will be put in place and monitored. Depending on the breadth of the problem, it could be quickly implemented or need a gradual introduction with multiple steps. It is also important to put in place a system that lets you monitor the solution for effectiveness. For example, if your team has experienced some difficulty, you might want to build in an agenda item to the end of your weekly meeting to address any issues that might have come up during the week. If the issue is one-on-one, you and your colleague may want to meet occasionally during lunch or break to go over any issues that may have arisen and to resolve them. The more comfortable you become with one another in solving problems to

your mutual satisfaction, the easier they will be able to resolve over time.

## Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are a natural part of life. We all have different values and beliefs that can shape our perceptions of the world, and these differences can often lead to misunderstandings and conflict. Conflict that is handled inappropriately can be detrimental to an individual's health and can lead to increased stress. It can also have an effect on the daily functioning of an office and, if left unchecked, can even lead to a toxic work environment.

Conflicts largely fit into three main categories:

- conflicts based on resources, procedures, and practices
- conflicts that are personal or based on relationships
- conflicts of interest

In large companies, the procedures for handling conflict are usually clearly documented in policies and procedures—from informal to formal complaint processes that may include mediation or arbitration. In small companies that have only a few workers, the steps for dealing with conflict may be less established, but the same skill sets apply.

Conflict resolution does not mean picking a winner and determining who is right and who is wrong. Instead, it should mean looking at a situation, gaining a better understanding of the different positions, and addressing the problem. You can learn the skills to deal with conflict in a constructive manner that enhances your decision making and contributes to effective working relationships.

Constructive conflict resolution is an opportunity for change, growth, and understanding. The most important quality in resolving a conflict is to avoid making judgments about other people and their statements. Instead, you need to be curious about different points of view.

For example, instead of thinking, “What a fool. How can they expect anyone to buy into this idea?” a constructive person thinks, “I wonder what they have in mind?” When you make the shift from judgment to curiosity, following through with the appropriate question, others are not likely to feel defensive. They may be flattered that you are interested in their ideas. When people do not feel defensive, they are more likely to consider new ideas and cooperate.

### Conflict resolution process

The steps in effective conflict resolution are as follows:

1. Acknowledge that there is a conflict that needs to be resolved. Since each human being is different, interpretations of when there is a conflict can differ significantly. Being able to clearly articulate what the conflict is, is part of being able to discuss and resolve it.
2. Create a neutral environment in which to discuss the issue. Choose a time and place that is convenient for both parties where there is minimal disruption. Make sure that both parties are

in the right state of mind to participate in the discussion. When either or both parties are very upset or angry, it is best to wait until they have time to get control of their emotions. If this is not feasible, then it is important to acknowledge the other party's feelings. This does not mean you have to agree with them.

3. Set ground rules for your discussion. Agree to work together to find a solution to the problem. Agree to allow each other the opportunity to state their feelings free of interruption. The person speaking should avoid being confrontational, abusive, or inflammatory. Instead of accusing the other person, information should be expressed in terms of personal feelings. For example, instead of "you did this," say "I felt this." The person listening should focus on trying to understand what the other person is saying and not on their own feelings or rebuttal. Once a speaker is finished, take the opportunity to ask questions that may help resolve the question. Both parties should be mindful of body language and tone of voice.
4. Stay focused on individual and shared needs. Find out what each person hopes to resolve from the situation and make this the basis of discussion. It is easy to go into other issues if you are uncertain of what your goals are.
5. Don't make it personal. Identify your own unconscious biases and feelings before you enter into the conflict resolution process. If you have a good idea of the emotion you are feeling, you will enter the resolution more aware of what is fueling your reaction to the conflict. Keep any preconceptions about the other person out of it, never make decisions based on assumptions.
6. Use good communication techniques. Model effective listening skills by making good eye contact, nodding and echoing back what the other person has said. Communicate assertively, be direct, calm and honest about the situation.
7. Keep your safety in mind. If for any reason things escalate or you feel unsafe, walk away and find someone you trust to assist you with resolution. It is also important to recognize if you feel that there may be a risk of escalation, choose a place to discuss the conflict that is easy to leave from, an open area or somewhere with multiple exits.
8. Stay positive. Look at the resolution of this conflict as an opportunity to learn new skills. Focusing on the negative is counterproductive.
9. Take a moment to consider what the other person has said and what you may not have considered before responding. This prevents a reactive response which can be emotional.
10. Make sure you have all the facts. A significant amount of conflict stems from miscommunication. If you feel as though you need more clarification or you do not understand something the other person has said, ask them to clarify. Be prepared to also clarify anything you have said to ensure there is no confusion.
11. Generate options. Depending on the type of conflict and the individuals brought in to help resolve the conflict, the options may vary significantly. Brainstorm and think of ways the issue can be resolved. Be respectful of other people's ideas and enjoy the process.
12. Set goals and develop an action plan. Depending on the issues being discussed, you may be able to immediately agree on one item that can be resolved, or you may identify several goals with a long-term action plan that may involve other participants. Resolution may require additional meetings and discussions between the individuals involved in the conflict.

13. Make a mutual benefit agreement. Both (or all) parties need to agree to a decision that they can accept; that is, a “win-win” situation rather than a compromise that neither party is happy with.
14. End on good terms. This is essential for you to be able to work collaboratively again in the future and resolve any other conflicts that may arise.

Sometimes conflict cannot be resolved through a mutual benefit agreement, perhaps because either one or both of the parties can't agree. In this case, there are two options. The first is to agree to live with the conflict or “agree to disagree.” This may work for minor conflicts, but if the problem is ongoing, it can grow in size and affect other employees and job productivity if it isn't resolved. This can lead to a toxic work environment, low morale and financial implications for the employer.

The second option is involving a mediator. This individual may be a supervisor (or supervisors if the parties are from two different departments), human resources staff member, and/or union representative.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 6

1. Who uses effective problem solving and decision making?
  - a. Your client
  - b. The project manager
  - c. Your immediate supervisor
  - d. Everyone. It is part of everyday life whether you are at home or at work.
2. The first step to solving a problem is understanding the issue and not jumping to conclusions.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Which of the following is not a step in problem solving?
  - a. Determine how the decision will be made.
  - b. Identify the issue and look for solutions to the problem.
  - c. Determine how the solution will be put into place and monitored.
  - d. Find out who is responsible for the problem so that you can assign blame.



4. Conflict is a natural part of life.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. Unresolved conflict does not affect the workplace. It only affects the individual(s) involved.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. How can unresolved conflicts increase your stress level and affect your health?
  - a. They contribute to hardening of the arteries.
  - b. They cause high blood pressure and increase the risk of heart attacks.
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
7. Conflict resolution means picking a winner and a loser.
  - a. True
  - b. False
8. What are conflicts in the workplace usually based on?
  - a. Resources, procedures, or practices
  - b. Personal issues or interpersonal relationships
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
9. You can reduce conflict in the workplace by being open minded and listening to other people's ideas rather than passing judgment.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. Which of the following is not part of the conflict resolution process?
  - a. Be positive.
  - b. Acknowledge the conflict.
  - c. Create a neutral environment for discussion.
  - d. Be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.
11. Identifying your own unconscious biases and feelings before you enter into the conflict resolution process is an example of which step of the conflict resolution process?
  - a. End on good terms
  - b. Stay positive

- c. Don't make it personal
  - d. Give yourself time to reflect
12. If you are struggling to come up with a solution to a particularly challenging problem or something you are lacking in experience with, it is best to reach out to someone for assistance.
- a. True
  - b. False
13. Avoiding miscommunication is an example of which step of the conflict resolution process?
- a. Make sure you have all the facts
  - b. Give yourself time to reflect
  - c. Stay positive
  - d. Don't make it personal
14. Taking a moment to consider what the other person has said and what you may not have considered before responding is an example of which step in the conflict resolution process?
- a. Make sure you have all the facts
  - b. Give yourself time to reflect
  - c. Use good communication techniques
  - d. Don't make it personal
15. Modeling effective listening skills by making good eye contact, nodding and echoing back what the other person has said is an example of which step in the conflict resolution process?
- a. Stay positive
  - b. Give yourself time to reflect
  - c. Use good communication techniques
  - d. Don't make it personal

See the [Answer Key](#) in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 7: Job-Search Strategies

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



*A BCcampus element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=48>*

Very few people are lucky enough to find their “dream career job” right away. Typically, there are a series of decisions to make, experiences and qualifications to gain, and opportunities to consider in the world of work before landing that “one perfect job.”

When you are looking for a job, the importance of the first impression you make can never be overstated—whether it is in writing, over the phone, or in person. To land the job you desire, you need to make a good and lasting impression.

In this section, you will learn about job-search strategies from self-marketing through to the interview stage.

### Uncovering Job Leads

The very first step toward securing a job is to find out who is hiring. Job leads come from two basic sources:

- The visible job market. The visible job market refers to jobs that are advertised in public places, such as newspapers, Internet job banks, and signs posted in stores.
- The hidden job market. The hidden job market refers to jobs that are not advertised publicly, but through word of mouth, networking, or direct contact with employers.

### The Visible Job Market

Accessing job leads through the visible job market is generally straightforward. You may find jobs posted in local newspapers, online, company websites, or other sources such as career fairs or signs posted in storefronts. Occasionally employers will post openings at training institutions or ask to make a class presentation to potential employees.

If you are searching for work through the visible job market, keep in mind that effective reading skills

are important to assessing job ads. Because advertising is expensive, most employers limit the size of their ads in order to reduce costs. To keep the ads short and to the point, employers often use jargon and abbreviations, which can make ads difficult to understand. Being able to understand job search vocabulary used in an ad will help narrow your options and find a fit that is right for you.

For example, you might come across a job ad that uses the abbreviation “a/p.” If you know that “a/p” means “accounts payable,” you might decide not to apply for the job because you don’t have any bookkeeping skills. You will save yourself a lot of time and effort by applying only for those positions for which you meet the minimum qualifications.

Sometimes employers provide a link in a job ad to their own website where the position may be described in more detail. Be sure to check this out, especially if you aren’t sure about any aspect of the job ad.

It is also important to be able to glean additional information from the ad’s that are posted. To understand the poster’s use of language in ad’s will allow you to flag workplaces that may not be particularly open to hiring you based on their own biases or may be inexperienced in diverse hiring practices. Ads posted looking for “Journeymen” are appealing only to a male audience by using gendered language, whereas ads that use gender neutral language such as “Journeyperson” show an inclusivity to all applicants. If a female identified Journeyperson wanted to apply for the ad looking for “Journeymen,” they might choose to only put their first initial on their resume, so as not to face discriminatory hiring practices prior to obtaining an interview. The language used in employment ads can provide us with hints towards our approach to applying for jobs.

### **Scanning job ads**

Learning how to scan ads for appropriate job leads can also help to reduce the amount of time you spend reading employment sections in newspapers or searching online databases.

“Scanning” refers to the ability to read information very quickly by looking for keywords. By not reading every single word, you can review an ad efficiently.

When looking at job ads, scan for the following information:

#### **Job category**

Know what job categories to look in. You are more likely to find an entry-level trades position under categories such as “construction and skilled trades,” “general labour,” or “other.”

#### **Job titles**

Know the different titles commonly used for the type of job you are looking for. In the restaurant industry, employers may use the titles such as prep cook, line cook, or kitchen help. In construction, you may look for the terms labourer, apprentice, or apprentice levels 1, 2, 3, or 4.

**Location**

Know the sections of town or regions that you're willing to travel to.

**Parameters**

Know your minimum job search parameters, including whether you want full-time, part-time, or casual employment. Be clear about your availability. Can you work evenings, weekends, and shift work?

**Salary**

Have a sense of your salary expectations, since wages are often advertised.

**Special skills**

Know what special skills you bring to the job and scan for them. For example, you may have industrial lift truck operator certification or first aid certification. Some online databases will even allow you to search by keywords.

**Accessing the Hidden Job Market**

Accessing the visible market may seem straightforward and the logical way to conduct a job search. But the more effective way to secure a job is through accessing the hidden job market—that is, finding a job that has not been posted publicly—because the majority of job leads are never posted. Instead, an employer and job seeker may make contact through personal connections or networks.

You can access the hidden job market through cold calling (a phone call or visit to an employer to inquire about possible job openings, even though none is advertised), asking friends, networking, making volunteer connections, or being at the right place at the right time.

While accessing the hidden job market may require you to be more resourceful, organized, and assertive, it can also provide you with a greater chance of finding employment and a better knowledge of your employer and working conditions. The extra legwork can also put you in tune with what is happening in an industry and provide new leads. You also need to be prepared for some dead-end leads as well as negative responses, but the experience you gain will improve your communication skills. You must always be prepared—you never know when a casual conversation can turn into a formal interview.

**Making contact**

A great way to access the hidden job market is to directly contact employers or people currently working in your field of interest. One challenge new job seekers experience is finding out exactly what a certain job entails. A job might appear great on paper, but you may not be entirely sure about the day-to-day reality.

One strategy to uncover the reality of a job is to conduct an information interview: that is, you contact a

potential employer and arrange to have a brief conversation about a job. This is sort of like background research. It is a way to learn more about a company and position before you actually submit a résumé. This process allows you to know exactly what the job is before you apply. Sometimes, an information interview can turn into a job interview.

In making contact with a potential employer, your communication skills are very important. You want to make a positive first impression. To do so, an effective strategy is to practice before you approach an employer for a meeting.

**Here are some guidelines:**

- Be clear about your intention for the call and the request for the information meeting.
- Keep your meeting professional and on time (ask for only 10 to 15 minutes of someone’s time).
- Keep your meeting focused on the purpose for your meeting.
- Present yourself in a manner fitting for an actual job interview. In preparing for the information interview:
  - Prepare questions by writing them down in advance.
  - Demonstrate that you have conducted some research on the company. Be sure to take a notepad and pen to record information when you go to your information interview. (It doesn’t hurt to take more than one pen, just in case one of them doesn’t work!)
- Once you return home, transfer your information into a table or database where you can keep track of the information.

Table 1 shows one possible format:

**Table 7.1: Contact tracking example**

Name	Organization	Date	Contact Info.	Notes
Don Miller, Apprentice Coordinator	DW Oil & Gas	June 2, 2021	(xxx) 455-1234 miller@dwog.com	Spoke to receptionist. Left message for DM.  Should call back by Friday. If no response, email next week. (Normally gets back to people within a week.)
Dave Jameson, Owner	Dave's Electric	June 5, 2021	(xxx) 652-2213 daveselectric@shaw.ca	Spoke to Dave's wife, Charlene, who does the books.  They don't currently have a 1st year apprentice. May be interested. Dave is out of the office until June  Suggested to call after June 18 to see if he is interested in meeting up.

Even if you have made contact with a potential employer who has told you there's no work, it's important to keep the name and contact information for that person on file. Maybe you really liked what the person had to say, and you think you might like to call back in three months to see whether any job openings have come up. Sometimes, maintaining regular contact with a potential employer over time can lead to a job because that person remembers your name from having spoken with you recently and on more than one occasion.

### The elevator pitch

Who are you? What type of work you are looking for? What skills do you possess that are relevant to your work target? All these questions require thought when you are job searching. You will encounter situations where you are speaking with someone who could be a potential employer but is unfamiliar with your background. Communicating who you are and the skills you possess requires more detail than a single sentence. You need a tightly structured response.

The "elevator pitch" is one way to get started: imagine getting into an elevator in a large office building. In the elevator, you recognize a manager from a company that you want to work for. You are both going up 35 floors—you have some time to introduce yourself and perhaps get a foot in the door with this company. You now have 90 seconds before the elevator reaches your floor to briefly introduce yourself and skills, essentially impressing upon this manager that you would be a great employee for the company.

The 90-second elevator pitch is something you should practice and perfect. It is the basic introduction of who you are and what you are looking for. It will form the basis of your introductory message when networking, your opening statement in telephone contacts with employers, and the foundation of your "Tell me about yourself" answer in an interview.

Most contacts are not looking for your life history. They are looking for a short summary of your skills. Develop a level of comfort in your personal presentation by rehearsing and practicing the delivery of your elevator pitch. You should be able to explain who you are and what you are looking for with confidence.

### **Step A: Job description**

Research an organization and job you are interested in. This may include looking at the company's website and publications, recent news stories, and any recent job postings.

### **Step B: Elevator pitch**

Structure your elevator pitch (90 seconds) by:

- introducing yourself
- stating your interest in working for the organization you've chosen
- identifying two to three skills that you possess that would make the organization interested in interviewing you

### **Step C: Evaluating your pitch**

The best way to gain confidence is to have others listen to your pitch and provide their feedback, or record your pitch and play it back. Feedback should be based on the following questions:

- Did you identify the organization and position that interests you at the onset of your pitch?
- Was the content well organized?
- Was your communication purposeful?
- Were your tone and vocabulary professional?
- Was your pronunciation clear and articulate?
- Was your delivery confident?

## **Dressing the Part for the Interview**

Whenever we meet someone for the first time, we make and form a first impression. First impressions are made within the first three seconds of an initial meeting. It doesn't take long to make one, and yet it can be next to impossible to reverse it. How we dress plays a large role in the first impression that we make. For example, a heavy-equipment operator would be inappropriately dressed if they showed up for an interview wearing a suit or a dress, whereas a person applying for a corporate position would not. In both situations, the person wants to present themselves in an appropriate manner. If you'll be working on a construction site or manufacturing setting, dress ready to work (e.g., clean jeans and an appropriate shirt or T-shirt and steel-toed boots). If you are interviewing for a service company similarly come dressed in a clean button up shirt or plain polo or tee shirt and clean khakis or jeans. Avoid wearing clothing that has offensive language or images on it, is dirty or torn, or is too formal for



the type of work you are applying for. An employer wants to be able to picture you on the job when they are interviewing you, whether it be in their uniform in the case of a service company or in work clothing on a construction site. If they cannot picture you doing the work, it will be harder for you to get the job.

## Résumés and Cover Letters

Your résumé and cover letter are the two documents that you will use to interest potential employers and let them know why you are the candidate they should shortlist or hire for a job. At times you may be creating these documents from scratch. At other times, you may be provided with online templates or questions that need to be completed and submitted electronically to the employer.

This section reviews how to write a résumé and cover letter. Once you know how to complete these documents from scratch, it is easy to fill out electronic forms and provide the necessary information.

### Résumés

A résumé is a “living” document. Sometimes professionals use the term CV instead of résumé. CV stands for curriculum vitae, meaning “course of life” in Latin.

Because your résumé summarizes your education, employment history, skills, and accomplishments, it will change every time you acquire new knowledge, a new skill, or a new job. In fact, you will likely need to update your résumé after completing this course to highlight your new skills and accomplishments. The résumé tells a potential employer what you can do and have done, who you are, and what you know. It also states what kind of work you’re looking for, so you’ll have to change your résumé depending on the type of job you’re applying for.

The purpose of the résumé is to help you get an interview. The average amount of time an employer takes to scan a résumé is 30 seconds, so how can you make your résumé stand out from the rest? The answer is to create interest. Describe your accomplishments actively and invite the employer to contact you. And be sure to provide enough information for the employer to evaluate your qualifications.

Here are a few résumé guidelines:

- Keep it short, no more than one or two pages.
- Organize it with coherent information presented in an attractive and tidy way.
- Focus it to show the employer how your skills and accomplishments can benefit the organization.
- Have proof to support every statement about yourself with a specific, recent example.

There are three main types of resumes: the chronological résumé, the skills-based résumé, and the combination résumé.

### **Chronological résumé**

A chronological résumé lists education, skills, and experience in reverse chronological order (the most recent experience first) with the focus on relevant experience. Chronological résumés are effective when you have a solid work history, and you are applying for a similar type of work as the work history.

### **Skills-based résumé**

A skills-based résumé lists skills and talents in order of importance. This form is more suited to those with limited experience and is therefore particularly popular with students. Skills-based résumés are effective when you have developed skills through school, hobbies, or volunteering, but do not have direct work experience. Skills-based résumés are also effective when changing careers.

### **Combination résumé**

A combination résumé is the most common format and combines prominent skills and relevant experience with the most recent history presented first. The combination format helps you to focus your résumé while providing a detailed work history.

### **Hints for writing your résumé**

Creating a good résumé starts with gathering all the information an employer will want to know about you. Whether you're creating a brand-new résumé or polishing up an old one, you first need to collect the relevant information.

Once you have gathered all the information for your résumé, the writing begins. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- A résumé has to be word processed (typed) and easy to read.
- Do not include your race, birth date (consider also leaving off the date you graduated high school as this can be used in reverse to find your birthdate), or social insurance number.
- Include your city and province but do not include your home address (this can create a personal safety issue in some situations).
- Important information, such as your contact information, should be easy to find.
- Avoid lengthy paragraphs. Use bullets to highlight information.
- Ensure you have 3 references at the ready (with complete contact information and where they are from) and they know that you'll be applying for jobs and they are your reference.
- Don't discount any skills that could be considered transferable, especially if you are changing careers. For instance, if you have worked in the food service industry as a server, you will have communication skills, customer service skills, time management skills and organizational skills that transfer easily to a job in the trades.
- Make it perfect! Have someone proofread it for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Do not handwrite corrections on the final copy.

- Use action words or verbs (e.g., coached, designed, built, organized) to describe your skills and experience. Refer to the list of action words below when you create your résumé and cover letter.

Although there is no set résumé style that you must follow, it is wise to use a format that is generally accepted and is easy for another person to read. Read through the following three sample résumés. All the samples are acceptable formats. Which one do you prefer?

**Wayne Kim**  
wkim@warmmail.com

PO Box 2200  
Far-Away, BC  
V21 5W7  
p50.212.2232

---

### Employment History

- |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |               |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 2004–Present | <b>Kekko Manufacturing Ltd.—Labourer</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Surrey, BC    |
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loaded and unloaded material to and from box cars</li><li>• Sorted materials into designated areas for transport</li><li>• Handled dangerous goods and materials safely</li><li>• Operated forklift and cleaned work site</li></ul>       |               |
| 2002–2003    | <b>PM-Tech Supplies—Survey Assistant</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Surrey, BC    |
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helped map subdivisions and residential buildings</li><li>• Measured and laid out sidewalks and curbs</li><li>• Operated metal punch, compactor, level, and transit</li><li>• Published documents in Word, Excel, and Publisher</li></ul> |               |
| 2001–2002    | <b>Wayfor Builders—Survey Assistant/Labourer</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Vancouver, BC |
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helped map residential homes</li><li>• Operated metal punch, compactor, level, and transit</li><li>• Cleared brush and debris from lines and survey</li><li>• Performed interior and exterior painting</li></ul>                          |               |
| 2000–2001    | <b>Dukes Restaurant—Server</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Surrey, BC    |
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Waited on tables with large and small groups</li><li>• Provided excellent customer service</li><li>• Oriented and trained new employees</li></ul>                                                                                         |               |

### Education History

- |           |                                            |             |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 2004      | BCIT—AutoCad Level II Certificate          | Burnaby, BC |
| 2003      | BCIT—AutoCad Level I Certificate           | Burnaby, BC |
| 2003      | Academy of Training—Forklift Certificate   | Surrey, BC  |
| 2000–2001 | Westwood College—Survey Technician Diploma | Surrey, BC  |

### Interests

Travelling, soccer, music, refinishing furniture

*References available upon request*

Figure 7.1 Chronological résumé

# Wayne Kim

wkim@warmmail.com

PO Box 2200  
Far-Away, BC  
V21 5W7  
250.212.2232

---

## Qualifications Summary

- Highly attentive to efficiency and accuracy
- Patient and organized with good problem-solving skills
- Knowledgeable in basic computer and Internet operations including Word and Excel
- Good communication skills and strong work ethic

## Relevant Skills

- 1 year's experience in helping to survey and map subdivisions and residential buildings
- Experience loading, unloading, and sorting materials to and from box cars
- Experience in cleaning up of construction sites, clearing brush and debris from lines or survey
- Capable of operating metal punch, compactor, level, transit, and forklift
- Knowledge of work site safety policies and procedures
- Experienced performing interior and exterior renovations and painting

## Employment History

2004-Present	<b>Kekko Manufacturing Ltd.—Labourer</b>	Surrey, BC
2002-2003	<b>PM-Tech Supplies—Survey Assistant</b>	Surrey, BC
2001-2002	<b>Wayfor Builders—Survey Assistant/Labourer</b>	Vancouver, BC
2000-2001	<b>Dukes Restaurant—Server</b>	Surrey, BC

## Education History

2004	<b>BCIT—AutoCad Level II Certificate</b>	Burnaby, BC
2003	<b>BCIT—AutoCad Level I Certificate</b>	Burnaby, BC
2003	<b>Academy of Training—Forklift Certificate</b>	Surrey, BC
2000–2001	<b>Westwood College—Survey Technician Diploma</b>	Surrey, BC

## Interests

Travelling, soccer, music, refinishing furniture

*References available upon request*

Figure 7.2 Skills résumé

Wayne Kim

wkim@warmmail.com

PO Box 2200  
Far-Away, BC  
V21 5W7  
250.212.2232

---

### Relevant Skills

- 4 years' experience helping to survey and map subdivisions and residential buildings
- Capable of operating metal punch, compactor, level, and transit
- Extensive knowledge of work site safety policies and procedures
- Work well unsupervised and in a detail-oriented environment
- Developed communication skills and strong sense of judgment
- Patient and organized with good problem-solving skills

### Employment History

- |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |               |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 2004-Present | <b>Kekko Manufacturing Ltd.—Labourer</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Surrey, BC    |
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loaded and unloaded material to and from box cars</li><li>• Sorted materials into designated areas for transport</li><li>• Handled dangerous goods and materials safely</li><li>• Operated forklift and cleaned work site</li></ul>       |               |
| 2002-2003    | <b>PM-Tech Supplies—Survey Assistant</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Surrey, BC    |
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helped map subdivisions and residential buildings</li><li>• Measured and laid out sidewalks and curbs</li><li>• Operated metal punch, compactor, level, and transit</li><li>• Published documents in Word, Excel, and Publisher</li></ul> |               |
| 2001-2002    | <b>Wayfor Builders—Survey Assistant/Labourer</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Vancouver, BC |
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helped map residential homes</li><li>• Operated metal punch, compactor, level, and transit</li><li>• Cleared brush and debris from lines and survey</li><li>• Performed interior and exterior painting</li></ul>                          |               |
| 2000-2001    | <b>Dukes Restaurant—Server</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Surrey, BC    |
|              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Waited on tables with large and small groups</li><li>• Provided excellent customer service</li><li>• Oriented and trained new employees</li></ul>                                                                                         |               |

### Education History

- |           |                                                   |             |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 2004      | <b>BCIT—AutoCad Level II Certificate</b>          | Burnaby, BC |
| 2003      | <b>BCIT—AutoCad Level I Certificate</b>           | Burnaby, BC |
| 2003      | <b>Academy of Training—Forklift Certificate</b>   | Surrey, BC  |
| 2000-2001 | <b>Westwood College—Survey Technician Diploma</b> | Surrey, BC  |

### Interests

Travelling, soccer, music, refinishing furniture

*References available upon request*

Figure 7.3 Combination résumé

## Using action verbs in your resume

The following are action verbs that can help you when preparing your resume:

### Creative

- |                  |               |                |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| • acted          | • developed   | • mapped       |
| • composed       | • established | • modelled     |
| • conceptualized | • fashioned   | • originated   |
| • created        | • founded     | • painted      |
| • cooked         | • illustrated | • performed    |
| • displayed      | • instituted  | • planned      |
| • drafted        | • integrated  | • photographed |
| • directed       | • introduced  | • printed      |
| • designed       | • invented    |                |

### Research

- |             |               |                |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| • clarified | • examined    | • Interviewed  |
| • collected | • extracted   | • Investigated |
| • critiqued | • identified  | • Organized    |
| • diagnosed | • inspected   | • Reviewed     |
| • evaluated | • interpreted | • Summarized   |

### Helping

- |              |                |                 |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| • assessed   | • demonstrated | • lead          |
| • assisted   | • diagnosed    | • managed       |
| • cared for  | • educated     | • motivated     |
| • clarified  | • expedited    | • referred      |
| • coached    | • facilitated  | • rehabilitated |
| • counselled | • familiarized | • represented   |
| • decided    | • guided       | • supervised    |

### Financial

- |                |              |              |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| • administered | • balanced   | • forecasted |
| • allocated    | • budgeted   | • managed    |
| • analyzed     | • calculated | • marketed   |
| • appraised    | • computed   | • planned    |
| • audited      | • developed  | • projected  |

### Management

- |                |                |               |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| • administered | • attained     | • contracted  |
| • analyzed     | • chaired      | • coordinated |
| • assigned     | • consolidated | • consulted   |

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- delegated
- developed
- directed
- evaluated
- executed
- improved
- increased
- organized
- oversaw
- planned
- prioritized
- produced
- recommended
- reviewed
- scheduled
- strengthened
- supervised

Detail

- approved
- arranged
- analyzed
- assessed
- catalogued
- checked
- classified
- collected
- complied
- copied
- defined
- dispatched
- executed
- evaluated
- examined
- filed
- generated
- implemented
- inspected
- learned
- monitored
- operated
- organized
- prepared
- processed
- purchased
- proofread
- processed
- purchased
- recorded
- retrieved
- screened
- specified
- systematized
- tabulated
- updated
- validated

Communicate

- addressed
- arbitrated
- arranged
- authored
- corresponded
- developed
- directed
- drafted
- edited
- enlisted
- formulated
- influenced
- interpreted
- lectured

Teaching

- adapted
- advised
- clarified
- coached
- communicated
- coordinated
- developed
- educated
- enabled
- encouraged
- evaluated
- explained
- facilitated
- guided
- informed
- initiated
- instructed
- persuaded
- set goals
- stimulated

Technical

- Assembled
- Adjusted
- Built
- calculated
- computed
- Drove



- designed
- devised
- engineered
- Fixed
- fabricated
- installed
- Lifted
- maintained
- operated
- overhauled
- programmed
- remodeled
- repaired
- scheduled
- solved
- serviced
- Tested
- trained
- upgraded

## Cover letters

You've written a brand new résumé or you've polished up an old one. Now what? You need a cover letter to introduce and communicate even more about yourself to a potential employer.

An exceptional cover letter is the key to getting your résumé read. The cover letter is a tightly written advertisement about you: the person who is applying for that particular job. It includes a description of:

- the position for which you're applying
- your skills, achievements, and experience that relate to the position
- your contact information

A cover letter accompanies your résumé when you apply for a job. Where a résumé may be considered generic enough to be easily adapted to several jobs, a cover letter is very specific and tailored for each job for which you apply. Therefore, it needs to be modified for each employer. The cover letter introduces you to a prospective employer and should make them interested enough to invite you for an interview. It is important to always send a cover letter even if you have spoken with the employer in person or by phone.

The cover letter includes:

- the standard format of a greeting
- an introductory paragraph
- a supporting paragraph
- a closing or summary paragraph
- a signature closing

It gives you the opportunity to highlight the skills in your résumé that are especially relevant to the job.

In the cover letter, be sure to do all of the following:

- Grab the employer's attention. You're trying to make yourself stand out against other applicants.
- Address your letter specifically to the person in charge, and include their title (e.g., Site Manager, Director of Human Resources). Researching that information, instead of addressing your letter "To Whom It May Concern," shows initiative. Make sure you have the correct

spelling of the person's name and are using the correct title and pronouns to address them. If you don't know what their pronouns are, it's best just to stick to their first and last name when addressing the letter.

- Base your correspondence to employers on what you can do for them, not on what you want them to do for you.
- Don't be presumptive, when formatting your letter don't make statements like "when I get this job," or "I expect to hear from you soon." Instead, be gracious using statements like "I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further."
- Use "I" statements, rather than "you" statements. There is a big difference between "I believe that I am a qualified candidate for this position" and "you will see I am the best person for the job"
- Interest the employer enough to read your résumé by specifically pointing out why you are perfect for the job.
- Provide information about how, where, and when you can be contacted.
- Tailor your letter to match the duties and qualifications of the job. Show that you know the employer's priorities and concerns, this can be achieved by reflecting back what they were looking for in their ad.
- Write a different letter for each application. Although all your letters can have the same format and some similar information, each letter must match each job for which you apply.
- Present something unique about yourself.
- Stay brief and focused. Keep the cover letter to one page.
- Keep the cover letter free of spelling and grammatical errors.
- Send an original copy of the cover letter, not a photocopy.

The following examples show a model for writing a cover letter and an example.

### Cover letter model

Your name

Your present address

City, province, postal code

Date of writing

Name of the person responsible for hiring

Title of the person

Name of organization and address

City, province, postal code

Dear (Name person responsible for hiring):

Re: Subject (a subject line is optional; normally you would list the name/reference #)

#### **Opening Paragraph**

Introduce why you are writing. Name the position to which you are applying. Make sure you say how you heard of the opening (newspaper, job ad online, colleague) and why you are interested in the position and the organization.

#### **Second Paragraph**

Refer the reader to your enclosed résumé providing additional information concerning your background and interests. Demonstrate to the employer how your interests, education, and experience fit the job requirements. Describe one or two important qualifications you believe are of greatest interest to the employer, keeping in mind your audience: the employer. If you have related experience or specialized training, point it out. Don't make the common mistake of saying, "I'd like a position so I can gain experience in my field"; show the employer what you will be able to do for the organization.

#### **Last Paragraph**

Close by thanking the reader for reviewing your résumé and by making a specific request for an interview. Remember to indicate that you will either phone for a personal appointment or that you can be reached at the stated telephone number (include it here for easy reference). Make sure your closing is clear and suggests a specific action.

Sincerely,

(your handwritten signature)

Type your name here

Encl.

### Cover letter example

Type your textbox content here.

September 16, 2015

Edna Wagnall  
HR Manager  
Srateher Electric  
1234 Pile Drive  
Victoria, BC V8G 5H5

Re: Electrical Apprentice – Position SE-0135

Dear Ms. Wagnall:

Please accept my résumé to the position of Level 1 Electrical Apprentice as advertised with campusjobs.ca on Tuesday November 15, 2015. The combination of my experience and training makes me an ideal candidate for this position.

I recently completed the Electrical Foundation program at Camosun College. I've worked summers and weekends for the past three years for Harbour and Sons Electric, working in the store, managing customer billing, and assisting on job sites with the electricians and their apprentices. I enjoy working as part of a team and taking on new challenges and look forward to furthering my career as an Electrical Apprentice.

I believe that I would be an asset to your company and hope to have the opportunity to discuss this with you further in an interview. I can be contacted by phone at (250) 210-2121 to arrange a meeting. Thank you for your time in considering my application, and I look forward in speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Alex MacDonald  
Encl.

### Review cover letter

Once you've drafted your cover letter, it is important to review it to make sure that you've addressed all points in the job posting and have created a clear and concise letter, free of spelling and grammatical errors. The following checklist can assist you with this task.

#### A. Check content (Have you done what you set out to do?)

- Does your cover letter address all of the key points/job requirements listed in the job posting?
- Is your résumé up to date? For example, are the employers or job functions you've listed in your cover letter in your résumé?
- Are there any unnecessary details in your letter or résumé that should be deleted? For example, as you gain more experience in your trade, some of your previous work experience may no longer be relevant and can be deleted from your résumé. As a general rule, a résumé can include 10 to 15 years of prior relevant experience.

## B. Check language (Is it easy to follow?)

- Are there any unnecessary words that need to be deleted?
- Are there transitions from one idea to the next?
- Are your sentences properly constructed?
- Are the words you selected accurate and specific? Don't hesitate to look up a word in the dictionary if you are not sure if it is being used correctly.

## C. Check format

- Do your documents (cover letter and résumé) follow the suggested format (or another recognized format)?
- If you use a subject line in your cover letter, does the title reflect the job posting? (Note: Some job descriptions require that you include the job posting number and job title in a subject line.)
- Do you have a new paragraph every time you change to a new idea?
- Did you include your name and the date?
- Did you use only one side of the page? In general, résumés and cover letters should not be double sided.
- Are your fonts and font sizes consistent throughout your documents?

## D. Check grammar, punctuation, and spelling

### A. Grammar:

- Do all subjects and verbs agree?
- Are the verb tenses consistent and correct?

### B. Punctuation:

- Are apostrophes used with all possessive nouns?
- Does each sentence begin with a capital and finish with end punctuation?
- Are proper names capitalized?
- Are quotation marks used correctly where appropriate?

### C. Spelling:

- Did you use spell check to catch obvious spelling errors?
- Did you read through the document manually to ensure that the spell check changes are correct? (Never rely on the automated spell check only to proofread your documents.)
- Did you manually look up difficult or confusing words in the dictionary?

## The Job Interview

A well-written cover letter and résumé may get your foot in the door, but it's the interview that will secure you the job. The interview allows you to verbally communicate who you are and what you can do. In addition to the skills you listed in your résumé, your verbal skills, thinking skills, and social interaction skills are on stage in the interview.

The interview is an exchange of information between an employer and a potential employee. A job interview allows an employer to get to know you as a person and to:

- determine if your personality will fit into the company
- ask what you can do for the company
- get a sense of your attitude about work and their business
- see what you know about their business
- verify the facts on your résumé and cover letter

A job interview allows you to:

- find out more about the position for which you have applied
- ask questions about the job and the company
- decide if you really want to work for this company
- convince the employer that you are the best person for this job

The interview process usually involves a short meeting (15 to 30 minutes) during which the employer will ask a variety of questions. These can range from very general—such as an overview of your work history—to the very specific, such as explaining a skill or knowledge set listed in your résumé. Being able to communicate well by answering questions effectively is an essential part of securing a job.

You might also be asked questions about what you would do in a certain situation, or to elaborate on a past experience. These kinds of questions and queries are called behavioural interview strategies. They help the interviewer evaluate your ability to solve problems and handle mistakes. They usually begin with phrases such as:

- Tell me about a time when... (you provided exceptional customer service)
- Describe a time when... (you had a difficult customer)
- Give me an example of your \_\_\_\_ skill (mathematical, organizational, etc.)

Other typical interview questions are:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What can you do for our company?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- Tell me about your leadership experiences.
- How would your classmates describe you?
- How would your teachers describe you?
- Why did you apply for this job?

## Practicing for the interview

It is important that you feel confident when answering interview questions. Too often people think they can memorize answers, and then under the pressure of the interview, they forget and lose focus. Rather than memorizing answers, it is a good idea to formulate a strategy to answer questions. One way to approach an answer is outlined below. Take note of the three parts to the answer.

### Sample Question: What are your strongest skills?

- **Part 1: Factual answer** – I feel that my strongest skills are my ability to work with my hands, follow specifications, and meet deadlines.
- **Part 2: Detailed example (proof)** – In school we had to create many projects, from custom pieces to duct fittings, and I was always top of the class in shop marks. I also have a letter of reference from JB Metals, where I completed a six-month work placement, attesting to the quality of my work and my ability to follow specifications and meet deadlines.
- **Part 3: Link to potential employer (value)** – I believe that these skills would be beneficial to your company because the custom work done here demands high quality, precision, and meeting established deadlines.

## Typical questions

The following are some typical questions that get asked in interviews. Read through each question and take some time to think about what your most appropriate response would be. It is helpful to practice with the three-part approach so that you will be able to address most questions in your interview without hesitation and have a strategy to address any new questions that you haven't prepared for.

**Hint:** Try answering these questions with a specific job opening in mind. Include relevant information you have researched about the company in some of your answers.

1. **Tell me something about yourself.**  
*The interviewer is trying to find out what kind of person you are, not merely about your job skills. Mention your personal strengths, interests, and abilities.*
2. **Why do you want to work here?**  
*The interviewer wants to make sure that you'll be satisfied with the job and likely to stay. This question also demonstrates if you have researched the company. Share what you learned about the job, the company, and the industry through your own research. Talk about how your professional skills will benefit the company.*
3. **Why did you leave your last job?**

*The interviewer is trying to determine whether you had previous work problems. Don't say anything negative about your previous company or supervisor. Simply give an appropriate reason, such as you relocated away from job; company went out of business; temporary job; no possibility of advancement; or wanted a job better suited to your skills.*

*Hint: In the interview, keep answers straightforward and concise. Try to keep answers to less than two minutes long.*

**4. What are your long-range career goals/objectives?**

*The interviewer wants to know if your plans and the company's goals are compatible. Talk about new experiences or responsibilities you'd like to add in the future that build on the current job you are applying for.*

**5. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?**

*If you have researched the organization, you should have an idea of what skills or qualities the company values. Use examples to illustrate your positive qualities and how they apply to work. In discussing weaknesses, talk about things that you recognize and have taken steps to improve.*

**6. What wage are you expecting?**

*Instead of stating a certain amount, ask the interviewer to discuss the company and the approximate pay range for the position. It is important to know what the current wage is for the position; you can find salary surveys at the library or on the Internet or check the classified ads to see what comparable jobs in your area are paying. This information can help you negotiate your wage once the employer makes you an offer.*

**7. Do you prefer to work alone or with others?**

*The interviewer wants to get a sense of your ability to get along well with others. Discuss the advantages of working in a group and be prepared to give concrete examples of your experience of teamwork.*

*Hint: Avoid one-word answers, such as "yes" or "no." Provide an example whenever possible.*

**8. Under what circumstances do you work best?**

*The interviewer may be indicating that the job can be stressful. Talk about several examples where you met deadlines and show how capable you were of rising to the occasion.*

**9. What are your hobbies?**

*The interviewer may be looking for evidence of job skills outside of your work experience or may simply be curious about your life outside of work. Employees who have creative or athletic outlets for their stress are often healthier, happier, and more productive.*

**10. What contributions do you see yourself making to this job/company?**

*Offer examples of actions you took and the positive results you obtained. Show how this ability transfers from your previous position to the new job/company.*

Here is a list of additional interview questions you may encounter and may want to prepare answers for:

- What do you see as being your most significant accomplishment?
- What are your expectations regarding career progress and promotion?



- Which of your jobs was the least interesting/most interesting and why?
- When you are supervising others, how do you motivate them?
- What motivates you to put forth your best effort?
- What would you look for in an employee and/or colleagues?
- How do you adapt to new situations?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- Describe your contribution to a group effort that you may have participated in.
- Have you ever had to work with someone who did not share the same work style or ethic as you? How did you manage that?

### **Inappropriate interview questions**

Some interview questions may not be relevant, can be considered discriminatory and you will have to decide whether to answer them. These can include:

- How much do you weigh?
- How tall are you?
- How old are you?
- What religion do you practice?
- Have you ever received psychiatric care?
- What is your sexuality?
- Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence for which you have not been pardoned?
- Do you smoke or drink?
- Are you married?
- Are you single?
- Do you have any children?

Under the law, you do not have to answer these questions, and you may want to ask how the question is relevant to the position. This can show an employer's biases and can spur you as an interviewee to make decisions on whether the employer's values align with your own. If you do not want to answer a question because it makes you uncomfortable and you feel it doesn't concern the job, you can answer by saying, "Sorry, I'm not comfortable answering that question." Being asked inappropriate questions by an employer may influence whether you choose to take the job if offered to you following the interview.

### **Questions you can ask**

To be perceived as an active participant in the interview process and to show your interest in the company, you can also ask questions. In fact, it is very important that you take the time during the

interview to ask questions yourself. You don't want to take a job that will not suit you (i.e., hours of work or benefits that may be unacceptable). You also want to be clear about what is expected of you so you can be prepared. Accepting a job and quitting shortly after can harm your professional reputation, especially if you live in a small community.

Some questions you can ask include:

- What qualities are you looking for in an employee?
- What are your expectations of new employees?
- Can you tell me about your training programs?
- How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
- What are the opportunities for personal growth?
- What are the challenging aspects of this job?

### What employers are looking for

Now that you have had an opportunity to think about questions and put yourself into an interview frame of mind, consider what else an employer is looking for. Consider the following points:

- **Make a good first impression.** The decision to hire is often made in the first 30 seconds. Practice coming into a room, offering your hand confidently, smiling, and introducing yourself. Use your left hand for carrying, leaving your right hand free for the handshake.
- **Be prepared.** Know something about the company. Bring an extra copy of your résumé, as well as a pen and a notepad to have something to hold in case you are nervous or want to make notes.
- **Stay calm.** Create a good first impression by appearing confident and being mindful of your body movement (hands, fingers, feet).
- **Watch your body language:**
  - Offer a firm handshake.
  - Stand up straight and look confident.
  - Sit only when instructed to do so or if the interviewer sits first.
  - Cross legs at ankles, not the knees.
  - Look at the interviewer.
  - Smile.
  - Remember to breathe.
- **Watch your appearance:**
  - Have clean, styled hair.
  - Make sure you're wearing clean shoes.
  - Make sure that you have clean fingernails.

- Don't wear strong perfume or cologne.
- Don't wear distracting jewellery.
- Carry your extra papers in a bag that's not ripped or tattered or a portfolio.

## Interview summary

The interview is an opportunity for you to get to know your potential employer in person and for your potential employer to get to know you! Interviews let you ask detailed questions about the job for which you are applying, which will let you and your interview panel know if you're the right person for the position. Effective communication is an essential skill during the job interview.

Make sure you know something about the organization for which you are applying. When you first greet the employer, introduce yourself cordially, and try not to be nervous. Pay attention to your body language and make sure that your appearance is professional.

In many cases during an interview, you will be asked to explain how you would respond to very particular situations where some kind of a conflict may be involved (behavioural interview strategies). One way to prepare for interviews is to anticipate the kinds of questions that you will be asked and to rehearse responses. You can formulate answers based on the facts about who you are, provide examples that support your opinion, and provide a rationale for how your response relates to the job for which you are applying.

After you've had the interview and are waiting for a phone call, is there anything else you can do? Yes! Thanking the person who interviewed you is one way to set yourself apart from other candidates. Write a positive, enthusiastic letter thanking your interviewer and restating your interest in the position.

## Thank-You Emails/Letters

Writing a thank-you email or letter is a step that many interviewees overlook but which can play an important role in helping you to secure the job. This small but thoughtful gesture can set you apart from other applicants, particularly when competition is high.

A thank-you letter or email:

- shows that you understand and practice good business etiquette
- keeps your name fresh in the employer's mind
- reinforces your interest in the position
- gives you a chance to reinforce some of the positive things you said in the interview
- allows you the chance to mention something that you might have forgotten to say in the interview
- lets you talk about the workplace you have seen and how you feel you would fit

## Which format?

Think of the thank-you letter as the concluding paragraph in a composition. Your cover letter is your introductory paragraph that states your purpose in applying for a job. The résumé and interview are your body paragraphs that expand the points outlined in your cover letter. The thank-you letter is your closing, restating your interest in the position and confirming why you are the best applicant for the job.

A thank-you letter can be written in the form of a business letter, a handwritten note, or an email. The business letter is the most formal. Handwritten notes are more personal, but they can be perceived as less polished and professional and therefore are not usually recommended. Email is appropriate when that has been your means of communication with the person you want to thank, or if your contact has expressed a preference for email. The important point to consider is the nature of the organization to which you are applying.

Of the three options, a business letter or email are likely the best. The letter or email allows you to further showcase your writing, editing, and communication skills, and provides the space needed to include details about your skills for the job.

### Business thank-you letters

Generally, your thank-you letter should include the following information:

- **First paragraph:** Thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you (mention the date). Remind them of the position for which you interviewed.
- **Second paragraph:** Restate your interest in the position and the company. Mention something you learned from the interview or comment on something of importance that you discussed. Again, emphasize your strengths, experiences, skills, and accomplishments, and slant them toward the points that the interviewer considered the most important for the position.
- **Third paragraph:** Once again, thank the interviewer for their time and consideration. If appropriate, close with a suggestion for further action (if a second interview is a possibility), or mention that you will follow up with a phone call in a few days. Include your phone number as well and offer the interviewer the chance to contact you.

The following is an example of a business thank-you letter.

Robert Smithson  
 5748 Evergreen Terrace  
 Vancouver, BC V8R 2H5  
 Ph: (604) 482-0945  
 Email: rsmithson@gmail.com

November 24, 2005

Mr. Bob Wignall  
 Owner  
 AutoPro  
 4573 Lincoln Street  
 Burnaby, BC V71 R3T

Dear Mr. Wignall:

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank you for meeting with me last Thursday. I would like to further restate my interest in joining your company as an auto body technician apprentice. As we discussed in our interview, I am currently in my third year of studies as an auto body apprentice at BCIT with two years' experience as an auto body assistant, and I am fully capable of performing the technician's work we discussed. I eagerly await more challenges that you may feel are a good fit to my current skill set.

I feel this apprentice position would be a perfect fit for my current skill set and I look forward to working with your team of technicians to further fine tune my skills in auto body.

If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me at (604) 482-0945. Thank you for your time, Mr. Wignall. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Robert Smithson

### Thank-you emails

If you choose to email your thank-you note, it is important to have a business-like writing style. Here are some conventions to follow:

- Make sure your email address is professional. If it is an address you use for MSN or corresponding with your friends (studley456@msn.com, for example), you may need to set up a new email account for business correspondence (a\_brown@msn.com).
- Use a meaningful subject line (e.g., Re: Interview for Carpentry Position).
- Double space between paragraphs.
- Use at least a size 10 font.
- Do not use texting-type abbreviations such as “k” or “u.”
- Pay attention to grammar, spelling, and punctuation (use the same rules as for business letter correspondence).

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- Don't use all capitals. Writing in capitals is the email equivalent of SHOUTING and people don't like it. By the same token, don't use all lowercase letters.
- Don't include anything that has potential to be offensive or misunderstood.

The following is a sample thank-you email.

Subject: Position of Labourer/Tool Room Assistant

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for interviewing me for the position of labourer/tool room assistant at Malouf Contracting. This job is an excellent fit for my skills and interests. Your company's social responsibility and philosophy of building green reinforced my desire to work with your organization.

In addition to my trade qualifications, I have a strong background in customer service. I am enthusiastic, enjoy working in teams, and am always ready to take on new challenges. After meeting with you, I understand how this role fits into Malouf's organization and the importance of being able to perform a variety of different functions at any given time. I believe that I'm the right candidate to fulfill this role.

I appreciate the time you took to interview me. I am very interested in working with your organization and look forward to hearing from you regarding this position. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Jessica Smith

(250) 555-6789

jjsmith@omg.ca

City



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 7

1. The importance of first impressions cannot be understated.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. What are the two main sources of job leads?
  - a. Friends and family
  - b. Head-hunters and company websites
  - c. Visible job market and hidden job market

- d. Advertisements online and in newspapers
3. Reading skills and understanding special vocabulary related to the industry/job are important to understanding the visible job market.
    - a. True
    - b. False
  4. Knowing how to scan job ads has no effect on the amount of time you spend searching for a job online or in newspapers.
    - a. True
    - b. False
  5. Through which means can the hidden job market be accessed?
    - a. Associations and networking
    - b. Cold calling, friends, and family connections
    - c. All of the above
    - d. None of the above
  6. An information interview should be conducted for every job you are interested in.
    - a. True
    - b. False
  7. How much time and effort does accessing the hidden job market require, compared with the visible job market?
    - a. Less time and effort
    - b. More time and effort
    - c. The same amount of time and effort
    - d. It's hard to tell.
  8. What do you do if a potential employer refuses to meet with you?
    - a. Send all your questions to the company via their general email address.
    - b. Go to the company personally and introduce yourself to the main receptionist and see if they can answer your questions or find someone who is willing to do so.
    - c. Go through the company directory and contact other individuals until you find someone to meet with you.
    - d. Be polite, accept "no" as their answer, and thank them for their time. Use their website and other sources of information to find out more about the company.
  9. The "elevator pitch" is a strategy to let a potential employer know about you and why you'd like to work at their company in a very short period of time.



- a. True
  - b. False
10. What are the three main types of résumés?
- a. Summary, detailed, and extensive
  - b. Extended, chronological, and skills-based
  - c. Summary, chronological, and combination
  - d. Chronological, skills-based, and combination
11. You should always use action verbs in your résumé.
- a. True
  - b. False
12. In general, a cover letter should always be written for every job application.
- a. True
  - b. False
13. What kind of information should be in your covering letter?
- a. The exact same information as in your résumé
  - b. Information about your expectations of the job
  - c. Information about your personality and interests
  - d. The issues addressed in the job posting in order to encourage the reader to look further at your application
14. The quality of my cover letter and résumé has no impact on my hiring process.
- a. True
  - b. False
15. All individuals with the necessary qualifications will be interviewed.
- a. True
  - b. False
16. Practicing for the interview and acquiring feedback on your performance is a good way to ensure that you are prepared and that you reduce stress the day of the real interview.
- a. True
  - b. False
17. There is a set of questions that most employers will typically ask.
- a. True
  - b. False

18. Which of the following are employers not looking for in an interview?
  - a. Good first impression
  - b. Overconfidence in your abilities
  - c. Optimistic and knowledgeable about their company
  - d. Showing up dressed appropriately and ready to work on the job
19. Questions about your personal attributes (e.g., weight, height, age, religion, sexuality) are not relevant and can be skipped over politely.
  - a. True
  - b. False
20. The behavioural interview strategy includes asking how you would respond in a particular situation where there is some kind of conflict.
  - a. True
  - b. False
21. Thank-you emails or letters are optional following an interview.
  - a. True
  - b. False
22. When writing a cover letter, you should use “I” rather than “you” statements.
  - a. True
  - b. False
23. When addressing a cover letter, you should base the title and pronouns you use on whether the addressee has a feminine or masculine name.
  - a. True
  - b. False
24. It is best to keep things simple during an interview and use “yes” or “no” answers whenever possible.
  - a. True
  - b. False
25. Adding “References available on request” to the end of a resume or cover letter is sufficient until you receive an interview.
  - a. True
  - b. False

See the [Answer Key](#) in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Summary

Click play on the following audio player to listen along as you read this section.



*A BCcampus element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb2/?p=50>*

In this competency we have provided you with an overview of the trends affecting employment in the Canadian economy and the information necessary to conduct further research on your own. We have described employer expectations and job satisfaction and looked at the importance of hard skills and soft skills and their relevance to successful employment. This includes an understanding of essential skills and their importance to employer productivity and competitiveness. We have also looked at employee expectations and how it is important that they align with the needs of the employer. We have looked at stress management, problem solving, and decision making. We have also provided all of the information necessary for you to conduct job searches, write effective résumés and cover letters, apply for positions, and prepare for interviews.

After completing the Learning Tasks in this Competency, you will understand that obtaining employment in your chosen field will require considerable work on your part, whether it be researching the job market and individual companies or preparing for interviews. As a potential new employee, it is your responsibility to develop the skills required to promote your strengths and qualifications to prospective employers. Your ability to meet your employer’s organizational requirements, goals, and expectations through continuous learning will open up additional employment opportunities as you gain experience in your trade.

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## Answer Key

### Self-Test 1

1. a. True
2. a. True
3. b. The ability to compete in a global market, a shortage of workers with specific credentials, and a skills gap
4. b. False
5. a. True
6. d. All of the above
7. b. False
8. a. True
9. b. False
10. a. True
11. a. True
12. d. Document use
13. a. True
14. a. True
15. a. Equity
16. b. Equality
17. c. Intersectionality
18. a. 5%
19. d. All of the above
20. a. True

### Self-Test 2

1. c. In the interview process
2. a. True
3. c. The ability to work well under pressure
4. c. Being fluently bilingual (English-French)

5. b. False
6. d. Increased flexibility, entrepreneurship, and work-life
7. a. True
8. c. All of the above
9. c. Ability to determine your working hours
10. a. True

### Self-Test 3

1. a. True
2. b. False
3. b. False
4. d. Individuals are considerate, inclusive, and supportive of one another.
5. c. All of the above
6. c. Consider the impact of words or actions and how they affect others
7. d. All of the above
8. a. True
9. b. False
10. b. Polices and reinforces heterosexual gender norms

### Self-Test 4

1. a. True
2. b. False
3. a. True
4. c. Respect and understanding
5. a. True
6. a. Taking sole responsibility for a decision made by a colleague or team
7. b. False
8. c. Mindful of the business relationship and respectful at all times
9. d. Listened to, documented, and brought forward to the appropriate individual according to company policy and procedures
10. c. Inclusive



## Self-Test 5

1. b. False
2. a. True
3. c. All of the above
4. a. True
5. b. False
6. a. True
7. c. Be assertive and discuss the issues with the appropriate individual(s).
8. a. True
9. c. All of the above
10. d. Seek help from a trained professional and get the help you need.
11. a. True
12. a. True
13. b. Go to the bar and drink.
14. d. Look at how you work and determine if there is room for improvement or increased efficiency.
15. a. True
16. b. False
17. a. True
18. a. qualified counselor
19. a. True
20. a. True

## Self-Test 6

1. d. Everyone. It is part of everyday life whether you are at home or at work.
2. a. True
3. d. Find out who is responsible for the problem so that you can assign blame.
4. a. True
5. b. False
6. c. All of the above
7. b. False
8. c. All of the above

9. a. True
10. d. Be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.
11. c. Don't make it personal
12. a. True
13. a. Make sure you have all the facts
14. b. Give yourself time to reflect
15. c. Use good communication techniques

## Self-Test 7

1. a. True
2. c. Visible job market and hidden job market
3. a. True
4. b. False
5. c. All of the above
6. b. False
7. b. More time and effort
8. d. Be polite, accept "no" as their answer, and thank them for their time. Use their website and other sources of information to find out more about the company.
9. a. True
10. d. Chronological, skills-based, and combination
11. a. True
12. a. True
13. d. The issues addressed in the job posting in order to encourage the reader to look further at your application
14. b. False
15. b. False
16. a. True
17. a. True
18. b. Overconfidence in your abilities
19. a. True
20. a. True
21. a. True
22. a. True

- 23. b. False
- 24. b. False
- 25. b. False



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## Versioning History

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.01. If the edits involve substantial updates, the version number increases to the next full number.

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Version	Date	Change	Details
1.00	2015	Book published.	
2.00	2021	Second edition published.	See <a href="#">About the Book</a> for a list of changes in the second edition.