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## **NNBIA Common Employability Skills Employer Toolkit**

This toolkit explains how to:

- Assess entry-level employees with little or no previous job experience
- Use work-based Learning activities for entry-level employees to practice and apply Common Employability Skills (CES)

Today, employers in every industry sector emphasize the need for employees who have certain foundational skills. These include having a strong academic grounding in reading and math, as well as individual abilities such as teamwork, problem solving, work ethic, and integrity. While employers rely on employees to have these common foundational skills, they do not always talk about or label them the same way. This makes it difficult for prospective employees and educators to know exactly what it takes to be ready to succeed in any career path in any industry.

The National Network of Business and Industry Associations (NNBIA) has brought together the organizations that represent employers from major economic sectors and has worked to identify the core set of fundamental skills that potential employees need in the workplace. NNBIA has also identified a common vocabulary to explain these skills. A full list of these skills is included in Appendix A.

This CES model is the foundation for all industries to map skill requirements to credentials and to career paths. As such, CES allows employees to understand the skills that all industries believe prepare individuals to succeed. Many believe these skills are not “teachable” but rather gained through experience and work history. It doesn’t seem to make sense that the same skills that keep applicants from gaining a job are primarily learned on the job.

The focus of this Toolkit is on entry-level employees with little or no work experience. The first section will provide an overview of the types of assessments most likely to be used to assess an individual’s CES pre-hire. Most of these are formal measures. Since CES are used in other areas of one’s life besides the workplace (i.e. Personal and People Skills), there are less formal ways to decipher if a candidate has these skills and how he or she might perform on the job. One such way is through Behavioral Interviewing, which is covered in-depth in the toolkit. It is important to keep in mind that any type of tool, formal or informal, are predictors of how well individuals will effectively integrate CES into their performance.

Since first-time and entry-level employees do not have a lot of experience with using CES in the workplace, the last section of the toolkit provides suggestions for teaching and practicing these types of skills through work-based learning, and therefore, increase their chances of success.

### **Types of Employment Assessments**

Because the assessment market is large and diverse, selecting an assessment vendor (if a company is going to use formal assessments) can be challenging. Below are the *categories* of the most commonly used assessments for the skills inherent in the CES.

\*from the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology

<http://www.siop.org/workplace/employment%20testing/testtypes.aspx>

## *Formal*

**Biographical Data:** The content of biographical data instruments varies widely and may include such areas as leadership, extraversion, creativity, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. It may also include specific job knowledge and skills like using software or mechanical tools. Biographical data typically uses questions about education, training, work experience, and interests to predict success on the job. Some biographical data instruments also ask about an individual's attitudes, personal assessments of skills, and personality.

**Cognitive Ability:** Cognitive ability tests typically use questions or problems to measure the ability to learn quickly, logic, reasoning, reading comprehension, and other enduring mental abilities that are fundamental to success in many different jobs. Cognitive ability tests assess a person's aptitude or potential to solve job-related problems by providing information about their mental abilities such as verbal or mathematical reasoning and perceptual abilities like speed in recognizing letters of the alphabet. *\*An example set of cognitive assessments is provided in the next section.*

**Integrity Tests:** Integrity tests assess attitudes and experiences related to a person's honesty, dependability, trustworthiness, reliability, and pro-social behavior. These tests typically ask direct questions about previous experiences related to ethics and integrity OR ask questions about preferences and interests from which inferences are drawn about future behavior in these areas. Integrity tests are used to identify individuals who are likely to engage in inappropriate, dishonest, and antisocial behavior at work.

**Personality Tests:** Some commonly measured personality traits in work settings are extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to new experiences, optimism, agreeableness, service orientation, stress tolerance, emotional stability, and initiative or proactivity. Personality tests typically measure traits related to behavior at work, interpersonal interactions, and satisfaction with different aspects of work. Personality tests are often used to assess whether individuals have the potential to be successful in jobs where performance requires a great deal of interpersonal interaction or work in team settings.

## *Informal*

**Work Samples and Simulations:** These tests typically focus on measuring specific job skills or job knowledge, but can also assess more general skills such as organizational skills, analytic skills, and interpersonal skills. Work samples and simulations typically require performance of tasks that are the same or similar to those performed on the job to assess an individual's level of skill or competence. For example, work samples might involve installing a telephone line, creating a document in Word, or tuning an engine.

**Interviewing:** Interviews vary greatly in their content, but are often used to assess such things as interpersonal skills, communication skills, and teamwork skills. They can also be used to assess job knowledge. Well-designed interviews typically use a standard set of questions to evaluate knowledge, skills, abilities, and other qualities required for the job. *\*This includes Behavioral Interviewing, which can be an effective predictor of job performance. This topic is covered in depth later in this toolkit.*

## Formal Assessment Example: WorkKeys to Measure Cognitive Skills

While this Toolkit is not designed to recommend specific formal assessment vendors, this section does describe the cognitive assessments of one of NNBIA's partners, ACT. NNBIA is working closely with ACT to determine which of its assessments best match the CES, then potentially develop additional measures where there may be gaps. Below is a summary of currently available products that measure cognitive skills, specifically those that falls into the Applied Knowledge category and one that has a place under Workplace Skills.

ACT WorkKeys assessments are research-based measures of foundational workplace skills that are broadly relevant across industries and occupations. ACT WorkKeys Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information form the basis of the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), a credential recognized by numerous employers. Issued at four levels, the ACT NCRC measures and certifies the essential work skills needed for success in jobs across industries and occupations. These assessments align to the Applied Knowledge Common Employability Skills, specifically the Reading, Mathematics, and Critical Thinking categories.

The ACT NCRC is awarded at four levels, based on the scores achieved on the component assessments.

- Platinum: Scores of Level 6 or higher on all three exams
- Gold: Scores of Level 5 or higher on all three exams
- Silver: Scores of Level 4 or higher on all three exams
- Bronze: Scores of Level 3 or higher on all three exams

The NCRC Certificate Program uses three WorkKeys assessments:

The *Applied Mathematics* test measures the skills people use when they apply mathematical reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving techniques to work-related problems. The test questions require the examinee to set up and solve the types of problems and do the types of calculations that actually occur in the workplace.

The *Locating Information* test measures the skill people use when they work with workplace graphics. Examinees are asked to find information in a graphic or insert information into a graphic. They also must compare, summarize, and analyze information found in related graphics.

The *Reading for Information* test measures the skill people use when they read and use written text in order to do a job. The written texts include memos, letters, directions, signs, notices, bulletins, policies, and regulations. It is often the case that workplace communications are not necessarily well-written or targeted to the appropriate audience. *Reading for Information* materials do not include information that is presented graphically, such as in charts, forms, or blueprints.

### *Other WorkKeys Assessments*

*Business Writing* requires standard business English, defined as writing that is direct, courteous, grammatically correct, and not overly casual. The WorkKeys *Business Writing* test measures the skills individuals use when they write an original response to a work-related situation. Components of the *Business Writing* skill set include using proper sentence structure, mechanics, grammar, tone, and word choice. It also includes organizing, focusing, and developing ideas. This assessment aligns to Applied Knowledge, specifically the Writing category.

For those industries where employees work with tools and machines, the *Applied Technology* assessment may be appropriate. The *Applied Technology* test measures the skills people use when they solve problems with machines and equipment found in the workplace. The skills include four areas of technology: electricity, mechanics, fluid dynamics, and thermodynamics. Individuals need to know the basic principles of each area. This assessment aligns to Workplace Skills, specifically Working with Tools and Technology.

The *Applied Technology* skill focuses on reasoning, not math. Therefore, individuals do not need to make calculations or use formulas to solve problems. When individuals use the *Applied Technology* skill, they can:

- Analyze a problem by identifying the problem and its parts.
- Decide which parts of a problem are important.
- Decide on the order to follow when dealing with the parts of the problem.
- Apply existing tools, materials, or methods to new situations.

### **Informal Assessment Example: Behavioral Interviewing**

Behavioral Interviewing, a technique developed by industrial psychologists, has been in existence since the 1970's. The technique was developed to help employers better analyze the positions for which they were hiring so they could select candidates with the knowledge, skills, and abilities for those positions.

Behavioral Interviewing is estimated to be 55% predictive of future behavior while traditional interviewing techniques are 10% predictive. According to CareerBuilder, 41% of companies say that a bad hire costs them at least \$25,000. Given this data, it's easy to understand why Behavioral Interviewing is a widely used technique by employers. It has an important place with those candidates with little or no job experience.

Behavioral Interviewing allows employers to carefully evaluate job descriptions then develop effective interview questions based on those evaluations. While the knowledge and skills among jobs varies greatly, there are a number of common skill sets that fall within the Personal, People, and Workplace Skills detailed in the CES Model. The extent to which the skills are used on an everyday basis may differ. For example, all employees should have good team working skills; however, those skills are absolutely crucial for those who aim to become supervisors. Whereas, customer service representatives may not need to be as strong in teamwork skills but would have to demonstrate superior customer service skills.

Most Behavioral Interview questions begin with phrases like "tell me about a time when" or "give me an example of." Behavioral Interviewing elicits stories that reveal how candidates will respond to situations they'll face on the job. Sometimes this is called the *Storytelling Technique*. These types of questions are also ideal for job candidates because they are able to provide detailed answers.

Employers typically look for three characteristics in a job candidate's answer:

- A *description* of the past situation: What was the complexity and magnitude of the situation? What was the interviewees' role?
- The *action* that the candidate took: How did the interviewee demonstrate his or her knowledge and skill sets?
- The *result* of the candidate's action: What impact did the action have on the company, positive or negative? If the impact was negative, what were the lessons learned?

If a candidate is not accustomed to answering these type of questions, the interviewer may need to ask more questions to get at the three-part answer.

The table below outlines the types of questions an employer might ask to determine if a candidate has CES. Included in each category are suggested questions for candidates with previous job experience and at least one designed for candidates seeking their first positions. Some of the questions apply to both experienced and new candidates.

*Behavioral Interviewing Questions Sorted by Common Employability Skills Categories*

**Personal Skills**

<b>Personal Skills</b>	<b>Questions for Experienced Candidates</b>	<b>Questions for First-Time Candidates</b>
<p>Integrity: Treating others with honesty, fairness, and respect.</p>	<p>Tell me about your previous company’s ethics and what you did to support them.</p> <p>Describe a time when your integrity was challenged and how you handled it.</p> <p>Has someone ever asked you to do something unethical? How did you handle it?</p>	<p>Describe a time when your integrity was challenged and how you handled it.</p> <p>Has someone ever asked you to do something unethical? How did you handle it?</p>
<p>Initiative: Demonstrating a willingness to work and seek out new work challenges.</p>	<p>Tell me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you performed duties that were beyond the scope of your job.</p> <p>Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead with a previous employer.</p>	<p>Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead with a previous employer.</p>

Personal Skills	Questions for Experienced Candidates	Questions for First-Time Candidates
<p>Dependability and Reliability: Displaying responsible behaviors at work.</p>	<p>Everyone has to bend or break rules sometimes. Recall an example of when you had to do this.</p> <p>What do you feel is an acceptable amount of days to be absent in a calendar year?</p> <p>How do you handle situations that could cause you to be tardy or absent? Give me an example of a time you had to do this.</p>	<p>Everyone has to bend or break rules sometimes. Recall an example of when you had to do this.</p>
<p>Adaptability: Displaying the capability to adapt to new, different, or changing work requirements.</p>	<p>Describe a time when your team or company was undergoing some change. How did that impact you, and how did you adapt?</p> <p>Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with this situation?</p> <p>Give me an example of a time when your schedule was interrupted by unforeseen circumstances. How did you handle it?</p>	<p>Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with this situation?</p>
<p>Professionalism: Maintaining a professional demeanor at work.</p>	<p>Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.</p> <p>Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person at work even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).</p> <p>Tell me about a time when an unfair decision was made at the workplace, and you were upset about it. How did you handle it?</p> <p>Describe in any job experience how you developed rapport with your peers and your supervisor.</p>	<p>Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.</p>

People Skills	Questions for Experienced Candidates	Questions for First-Time Candidates
<p>Teamwork: Demonstrating the ability to work effectively with others.</p>	<p>Tell me about an occasion when you needed to work with a group or another person to get a job done. What steps did you take?</p> <p>Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.</p> <p>What did you do in your last job to contribute toward a teamwork environment? Be specific.</p>	<p>Tell me about your experience working on teams. This could be at school or in another environment. What role did you play?</p>
<p>Communication: Maintaining open lines of communication with others.</p>	<p>Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone’s opinion.</p> <p>Describe a job experience in which you had to speak up to be sure that other people knew what you thought or felt.</p> <p>Can you tell me a time when you were able to effectively “read” another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their individual needs or values?</p>	<p>Can you tell me a time when you were able to effectively “read” another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their individual needs or values?</p>
<p>Respect: Working effectively with those who have diverse backgrounds.</p>	<p>Explain how diversity has played a role in your career.</p> <p>Describe a time where you had to work with someone with a different cultural, racial, or ethnic background different from you, any challenges it may have created, and how you dealt with the situation.</p> <p>Have you worked with a person who did things differently than you on the job? How did you resolve any conflicts that may have arisen?</p>	<p>What does diversity mean to you?</p>



Workplace Skills	Questions for Experienced Candidates	Questions for First-Time Candidates
<p>Planning and Organizing: Planning and prioritizing work to manage time effectively and accomplish assigned tasks.</p>	<p>Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.</p> <p>What did you do in your last job in order to be effective with your organization and planning? Be specific.</p> <p>What process do you use to establish priorities on the job? Be specific.</p>	<p>Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.</p>
<p>Problem Solving: Demonstrating the ability to apply critical thinking skills to solve problems by generating, evaluating, and implementing solutions.</p>	<p>Give an example of a time when you had to make a quick decision and describe the steps you took to reach that decision.</p> <p>Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.</p> <p>Provide an example of a time at work in which you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information for solving a problem.</p>	<p>Give an example of a time when you had to make a quick decision and describe the steps you took to reach that decision.</p> <p>Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.</p> <p>Provide an example of a time at work in which you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information for solving a problem.</p>
<p>Decision Making: Applying critical thinking skills to solve problems encountered in the workplace.</p>	<p>Give an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision. Was this comfortable for you?</p> <p>Describe a decision you made in the last year that you're very proud of.</p> <p>Give an example of a time when you had to keep from speaking or making a decision at work because you did not have enough information.</p>	<p>Give an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision. Was this comfortable for you?</p> <p>Describe a decision you made in the last year that you're very proud of.</p>

Workplace Skills	Questions for Experienced Candidates	Questions for First-Time Candidates
Customer Focus: Actively look for ways to identify market demands and meet customer or client needs.	<p>What is your philosophy of good customer service? Describe a time when you used this customer philosophy to deal with a perplexing problem.</p> <p>Describe the most creative way you have solved a customer’s problem.</p> <p>When you’re working with a large number of customers, it’s tricky to deliver excellent service to them all. How do you go about prioritizing your customers’ needs? Give me an example.</p>	What does “good customer service” mean to you as a consumer? How do you see this playing out on the job?

**Sources:**

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Quint Careers: <http://www.quintcareers.com/sample-behavioral/>

Albany Timesunion: <http://blog.timesunion.com/careers/50-behavioral-based-interview-questions-you-might-be-asked/1538/>

Monster: <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/interview-preparation/You-Can-Survive-the-Behavioral-Interview/article.aspx>

The Essential HR Handbook: <http://theessentialhrhandbook.com>

Career Playbook web site: <http://www.thecareerplaybook.com/>

Career Builder: <http://thehiringsite.careerbuilder.com/2011/03/02/the-pros-and-cons-of-behavioral-interviewing/>

**Work-based Learning: Teaching and Applying the CES at the Workplace**

Can employability skills be taught? The answer is yes and no. Some employability skills can be modeled and taught. Others cannot be taught in the traditional sense but can be brought to light and practiced. Regardless, it is most important to emphasize these types of skills, clarify why they are important, and explain how they can mean the difference between being a valued, successful employee, or being asked to leave a company.

This section provides recommendations on how employers can teach CES to those employees with little or no job experience, providing the opportunity to apply and practice using CES. Some of the suggestions are teaching techniques, such as using scenarios. Others are websites that offer training in specific topics. There are a variety of ways to teach CES and they are not limited to what is included in this guide. The

information included provides a launching point for employers to get started. These ideas can also be effectively used with others new to the workplace, such as interns.

CES Category	Ideas for Teaching/Applying at the Workplace
<b>PERSONAL</b>	
Integrity	<p>Present scenarios that could include dilemmas requiring difficult personal decisions.</p> <p>Aspects of Integrity for Discussion:  <a href="http://smallbusiness.chron.com/examples-integrity-workplace-10906.html">http://smallbusiness.chron.com/examples-integrity-workplace-10906.html</a></p> <p>Sample Scenarios:  <a href="http://humanresources.about.com/od/Trust/g/what-is-integrity.htm">http://humanresources.about.com/od/Trust/g/what-is-integrity.htm</a></p>
Initiative Dependability & Reliability Adaptability Professionalism	<p>Using the Behavioral Checklist included in this guide, do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have both the employee and supervisor complete the ratings and compare results.</li> <li>▪ Have the supervisor coach the employee in areas where both rated the employee weak.</li> <li>▪ Have the supervisor coach the employee in areas where there is a rating gap between the employee and supervisor.</li> </ul>
<b>PEOPLE SKILLS</b>	
Teamwork	<p>Assign employees to team projects. At the project's conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have team members evaluate one another on how well they work in a team, ensuring confidentiality of each rater.</li> <li>▪ Have supervisors review the results with the team members and engage in coaching sessions. A team rating template is included in Appendix C.</li> </ul>
Communication	<p>The Center for Energy Workforce Development has donated a communication module from their Employability Skills Workshop in Appendix D.</p>
Respect	<p>Created to spark discussions on diversity, biases, and stereotyping, these beans were developed to help people move beyond differences and experience unmet expectations. Diversity Beans are red, orange, yellow, green, black, white and come in the following flavors: cinnamon, orange, root beer, coconut, sour apple, licorice, pineapple, grape, huckleberry, cherry, lemon, lime. Don't try to determine the flavor of these beans by looking at their color--you'll never be able to guess!</p> <p>Each bag contains the following quote, "This candy is just like people--you can't determine what is on the inside by simply looking at the outside. Diversity Beans remind us to experience people one at a time and enjoy their unique qualities. Diversity is Strength! <i>and includes you...</i>"</p>

CES Category	Ideas for Teaching/Applying at the Workplace
	<p>Each bag of jelly beans is \$15 and can be ordered at:  <a href="http://www.icelebratediversity.com/sensitivity-training-activity-diversity-beans-bag-1lb">http://www.icelebratediversity.com/sensitivity-training-activity-diversity-beans-bag-1lb</a></p>
<b>APPLIED KNOWLEDGE</b>	
Reading	<p>GCFLearn.org has a reading program created specifically for adults. This information is covered more thoroughly in the next section.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gcflearnfree.org/reading">http://www.gcflearnfree.org/reading</a></p> <p>In addition, have employees read memos, manuals, and other workplace documents that provide some context.</p> <p>For companies that use the WorkKeys, there is an online reading training module available through KeyTrain:</p> <p><a href="http://www.keytrain.com">http://www.keytrain.com</a></p> <p>This computer-based program individualizes instruction based on each person's abilities. The program is available for a fee.</p>
Writing	<p>GCFLearnfree.org has a section titled communications that mostly focuses on written workplace communications.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gcflearnfree.org/workplaceskills/communicationskills">http://www.gcflearnfree.org/workplaceskills/communicationskills</a></p>
Mathematics	<p>Use the math videos on the Khan Math Academy website:  <a href="https://www.khanacademy.org/math">https://www.khanacademy.org/math</a></p> <p>For basic topics, use GCFLearnfreeorg:  <a href="http://www.gcflearnfree.org/math">http://www.gcflearnfree.org/math</a>.</p> <p>For companies that use WorkKeys, there is online math training available through KeyTrain:  <a href="http://www.keytrain.com">http://www.keytrain.com</a></p> <p>This computer-based program individualizes instruction based on each person's abilities. The program is available for a fee.</p>
Science	<p>Use videos on the Khan Science Academy website. There are a variety of science topics such as biology, chemistry, and physics. Employees can simply complete the introductory lessons at the beginning of the units.</p> <p><a href="https://www.khanacademy.org/science">https://www.khanacademy.org/science</a></p>

CES Category	Ideas for Teaching/Applying at the Workplace
Technology	<p>Have internal IT staff conduct hands-on training sessions on information technology and related applications to convey and retrieve information.</p> <p>In addition, GCFLearnfree.org has basic information technology online courses:  <a href="http://www.gcflearnfree.org/technology">http://www.gcflearnfree.org/technology</a></p>
Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop scenarios based on rare work activities, such as during emergencies when normal work plans need to be adjusted to resolve the most critical items first.</li> <li>▪ Present the scenario to the workers and discuss ways of dealing with the situations.</li> </ul>
<b>WORKPLACE SKILLS</b>	
Planning & Organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have internal IT staff teach employees how to use the tools that the company uses for planning and organizing, such as Outlook.</li> <li>▪ In addition, have employees develop a basic project plan for new projects. A template is included in Appendix E.</li> </ul>
Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present real-world scenarios of problems encountered at the company.</li> <li>▪ Teach the problem solving process outlined in this category of the CES Model.</li> <li>▪ Have employees pair up to write and share how they would solve the problem using the process.</li> </ul>
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present real-world scenarios of the types of decisions employees will need to make in their line of work.</li> <li>▪ Walk through the decision making process outlined in this category of the CES Model.</li> <li>▪ It may be helpful to present a positive decision vs. negative decisions based on the company's policies and procedures handbook.</li> </ul>
Business Fundamentals	<p>These topics are most likely covered in new employee orientation. However, if there are knowledge gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Distribute workplace documents that feature basic information about the company and the industry.</li> <li>▪ Have employees write summaries of what they have learned.</li> </ul>

CES Category	Ideas for Teaching/Applying at the Workplace
Customer Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Role-play customer service scenarios that employees might encounter in the workplace.</li> <li>▪ Develop case studies based on incidents reported to your customer service department.</li> <li>▪ Ask employees how the various scenarios should be handled, providing prompts and reinforcement for ideas that would prevent or alleviate the situation.</li> </ul>
Working with Tools & Technology	<p>Specific tools and technology vary by workplace. The most effective way for employees to learn how to use a new tool or technology is for the employees to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Watch a demonstration.</li> <li>▪ Try the tool or use the technology with assistance and feedback.</li> <li>▪ Use the tool or technology without assistance.</li> </ul> <p>All three of the steps are equally important, so be sure to work through each one to ensure safe operation of the tool or technology.</p>

### *Free Courses and Curriculum*

#### GCFL

For more than a decade, the GCFLearnFree.org program has helped millions around the world learn the essential skills they need to live and work in the 21st century. From Microsoft Office and email to reading, math, and more, GCFLearnFree.org offers 125 tutorials, including more than 1,100 lessons, videos, and interactives, completely free. Courses have won awards from the Sloan Foundation and the International Association of Continuing Education and Training.

<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/workplaceskills/jobssuccess>  
<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/workplaceskills/communicationskills>  
<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/workplaceskills/workplacebasics>

#### CareerOne Stop

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, these videos demonstrate skills and abilities employers are looking for in job candidates. Each video also includes examples of careers that require the skills or abilities discussed.

<http://www.careeronestop.org/Videos/SkillandAbilityVideos/skill-and-ability-videos.aspx>

## Khan Academy

Khan Academy offers practice exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard that empower learners to study at their own pace in and outside of the classroom. Their math missions guide learners from kindergarten to calculus using state-of-the-art, adaptive technology that identifies strengths and learning gaps. Khan Academy also offers a number of science courses.

<https://www.khanacademy.org>

## Career Competencies Website

Lesson plan activities are provided for each competency area. The curriculum is designed for young adults transitioning to the world of *work*, *which may be applicable to some newer employees who are early in the careers*. Can be utilized as an individual context *based* program instruction on career competencies. These *lesson plans* offer some new approaches to some tried-and true *job-readiness* basics.

# Appendix A



## **Common Employability Skills**

### **Personal Skills**

#### INTEGRITY:

Treating others with honesty, fairness, and respect

- Demonstrate respect for company's time and property
- Accept responsibility for one's decisions and actions

#### INITIATIVE:

Demonstrating a willingness to work and seek out new work challenges

- Take initiative in seeking out new responsibilities and work challenges, increasing the variety and scope of one's job
- Pursue work with energy, drive, and effort to accomplish tasks
- Establish and maintain personally challenging, but realistic, work goals
- Strive to exceed standards and expectations

#### DEPENDABILITY & RELIABILITY:

Displaying responsible behaviors at work

- Behave consistently, predictably, and reliably
- Fulfill obligations, complete assignments, and meet deadlines
- Follow written and verbal directions
- Comply with organization's rules, policies, and procedures;
- Demonstrate regular and punctual attendance

#### ADAPTABILITY

Displaying the capability to adapt to new, different, or changing requirement

- Be open to learning and considering new ways of doing things
- Actively seek out and carefully consider the merits of new approaches to work
- Embrace new approaches when appropriate and discard approaches that are no longer working
- Effectively change plans, goals, actions, or priorities to deal with changing situations

#### PROFESSIONALISM:

Maintaining a professional demeanor at work

- Demonstrate self-control by maintaining composure and keeping emotions in check, even in difficult situations
- Maintain a professional appearance by dressing appropriately for the job and maintaining personal hygiene
- Use professional language when speaking with supervisors, co-workers, and customers
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Take ownership of one's work

## **People Skills**

### TEAMWORK:

Demonstrating the ability to work effectively with others

- Establish a high degree of trust and credibility with others
- Interact professionally and respectfully with supervisors and co-workers
- Develop constructive working relationships and maintain them over time
- Use appropriate strategies and solutions for dealing with conflicts and differences to maintain a smooth workflow

### COMMUNICATION:

Maintaining open lines of communication with others

- Demonstrate sensitivity and empathy
- Listen to and consider others' viewpoints
- Recognize and interpret the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others
- Speak clearly, in precise language and in a logical, organized, and coherent manner

### RESPECT:

Working effectively with those who have diverse backgrounds

- Demonstrate sensitivity and respect for the opinions, perspectives, customs, and individual differences of others
- Be flexible and open-minded when dealing with a wide range of people
- Value diversity of approaches and ideas

## **Applied Knowledge**

### READING:

Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents

- Read and comprehend work-related instructions and policies, memos, bulletins, notices, letters, policy manuals, and governmental regulations
- Read and comprehend documents ranging from simple and straightforward to more complex and detailed
- Attain meaning and comprehend core ideas from written materials
- Integrate what is learned from written materials with prior knowledge
- Apply what is learned from written materials to work situations

### WRITING:

Using Standard English to clearly communicate thoughts, ideas, and information in written form

- Prepare written materials that are easy to understand using correct wording
- Communicate thoughts, ideas, information, messages, and other information conveyed in written form in a logical, organized, and coherent manner
- Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
- Write in a factual manner in a tone appropriate for the target audience in multiple formats

## MATHEMATICS:

Using mathematics to solve problems

- Add, subtract, multiply and divide whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percents
- Convert decimals to fractions; convert fractions to percents
- Calculate averages, ratios, proportions, and rates
- Take measurement of time, temperature, distance, length, width, height, and weight; convert one measurement to another
- Translate practical problems into useful mathematical expressions

## SCIENCE:

Knowing and applying scientific principles and methods to solve problems

- Understand basic scientific principles
- Understand the scientific method (i.e., identify problem, collect information, form opinion and draw conclusion)
- Apply basic scientific principles and technology to solve problems and complete tasks

## TECHNOLOGY:

Demonstrating IT skills for workplace efficiency and work flow

- Navigation and File Management
  - Understand common computer terminology
  - Use scroll bars, a mouse and dialog boxes to work within the computer's operating system
  - Access and switch between applications and files of interest
  - Adhere to standard conventions for safeguarding privacy and security
- Internet and Email
  - Navigate the Internet to find information
  - Open and configure standard browsers
  - Use searches, hypertext references and transfer protocols (enter URLs)
  - Send and retrieve electronic mail (email)

## CRITICAL THINKING:

Using logical thought processes to analyze and draw conclusions

- Identify inconsistent or missing information
- Critically review, analyze, synthesize, compare, and interpret information
- Draw conclusions from relevant and/or missing information
- Test possible hypotheses to ensure the problem is correctly diagnosed and the best solution is found

## Workplace Skills

### PLANNING & ORGANIZING:

Planning and prioritizing work to manage time effectively and accomplish assigned tasks

- Able to plan and schedule tasks so that work is completed on time
- Able to prioritize various competing tasks
- Demonstrate the effective allocation of time and resources effectively
- Will take necessary corrective action when projects go off track

### PROBLEM SOLVING:

Demonstrate the ability to apply critical-thinking skills to solve problems by generating, evaluating, and implementing solutions

- Able to identify and define the problem
- Will communicate the problem to appropriate personnel
- Capable of generating possible solutions
- Able to choose and implement a solution

### DECISION MAKING:

Applying critical thinking skills to solve problems encountered in the workplace

- Identify and prioritize the key issues involved to facilitate the decision-making process
- Anticipate the consequences of decisions
- Involve people appropriately in decisions that may impact them
- Quickly respond with a back-up plan if a decision goes amiss

### BUSINESS FUNDAMENTALS:

Having fundamental knowledge of the organization and the industry

- Understand the importance of one's role in the functioning of the company and the potential impact one's performance can have on the success of the organization
- Recognize the importance of maintaining privacy and confidentiality of company information, as well as that of customers and co-workers and comply with intellectual property laws
- Understand the significance of maintaining a healthful and safe environment and report any violations/discrepancies to appropriate personnel

### CUSTOMER FOCUS:

Actively looking for ways to identify market demands and meet customer or client needs

- Understand and anticipate customer needs
- Provide personalized service with prompt and efficient responses to meet the requirements, requests, and concerns of customers or clients
- Be pleasant, courteous, and professional when dealing with internal and external customers or clients
- Evaluate customer or client satisfaction

## WORKING WITH TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY:

Selecting, using, and maintaining tools and technology to facilitate work activity

- Identify, select, and use appropriate tools and technological solutions to frequently encountered problems
- Carefully consider which tools or technological solutions are appropriate for a given job, and consistently chose the best tool or technological solution for the problem at hand
- Operate tools and equipment in accordance with established operating procedures and safety standards
- Seek out opportunities to improve knowledge of tools and technologies that may assist in streamlining work and improving productivity

## **Appendix B**

# Common Employability Skills Behavioral Assessment Form

To Be Completed by Supervisor.

Employee's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate if you have or have not observed the employability skills in the above employee by checking the appropriate column. You may also include comments in the comments box for each category.

**If you did not observe any of the behaviors listed in a category, please indicate that in the comments box.**

Demonstrates consistently			
			Demonstrates sometimes
		Does not demonstrate	
<b>Initiative: Demonstrating a willingness to work and seek out new challenges.</b>			
			Takes initiative in seeking out new responsibilities and work challenges, with increasing variety and scope of one's academic performance.
			Pursues work with energy, drive, and effort to complete tasks assigned.
			Establishes and maintains personally challenging—but realistic—career goals.
			Strives to exceed standards and expectations.
Comments:			
<b>Integrity: Treating others with honesty, fairness, and respect.</b>			
			Demonstrates respect for company's time and property.
			Accepts responsibility for one's decisions and actions.
Comments:			
<b>Professionalism: Maintaining a professional demeanor at work.</b>			
			Demonstrates self-control by maintaining composure and keeping emotions in check, even in difficult situations.
			Maintains professional appearance by dressing appropriately for the job and maintains personal hygiene.
			Uses professional language when speaking with supervisors, co-workers, and customers.

Demonstrates consistently			
Demonstrates sometimes			
Does not demonstrate			
			Maintains a positive attitude.
			Takes ownership of one's work.
Comments:			
Dependability/Reliability: Displaying responsible behaviors at work.			
			Behaves consistently, predictably, and reliably.
			Fulfills obligations, completes assignments, and meets deadlines.
			Follows written and oral directions.
			Complies with company rules, policies, and procedures.
			Demonstrates regular and punctual attendance.
Comments:			
Adaptability: Displaying the capability to adapt to new, different or changing requirements.			
			Open to learning and considering new ways of doing things.
			Actively seeks out and carefully considers the merits of new approaches to work.
			Embraces new approaches when appropriate and discard approaches that are no longer working.
			Effectively changes plans, goals, actions, or priorities to deal with changing situations.
Comments:			
Customer Focus: Actively looking for ways to identify market demands and meet customer or client needs.			
			Understands and anticipates customer needs.
			Provides personalized service with prompt and efficient responses to meet the requirements, requests, and concerns of customers or clients.
			Is pleasant, courteous, and professional when dealing with internal and external customers or clients.
			Evaluates customer or client satisfaction.
Comments:			



Demonstrates consistently			
Demonstrates sometimes			
Does not demonstrate			
Communication: Maintaining open lines of communication.			
			Demonstrates sensitivity and empathy.
			Listens to and carefully considers others' viewpoints.
			Recognizes and interprets the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others.
			Speaks clearly, in precise language, and in a logical, organized, and coherent manner.
Comments:			
Teamwork: Demonstrating the ability to work effectively with others.			
			Establishes a high degree of trust and credibility with others.
			Interacts professionally and respectfully with the instructor and fellow students.
			Develops constructive relationships and maintains them over time.
			Uses appropriate strategies and solutions for dealing with conflicts and differences to maintain a smooth workflow.
Comments:			
Working with Tools and Technology: Select, use and maintain tools and technology to facilitate work activity.			
			Identifies, selects and uses appropriate tools or technological solutions to frequently encountered problems.
			Carefully considers which tools or technological solutions are appropriate for a given job and consistently chooses the best tool or technological solution for the problem at hand.
			Operates tools and equipment in accordance with established operating procedures and safety standards.
			Seeks out opportunities to improve knowledge of tools and technologies that may assist in streamlining work and improving productivity.
Comments:			
Decision-Making: Apply critical-thinking skills to solve problems encountered in the workplace.			
			Identifies and prioritizes the key issues involved to facilitate the decision making process.
			Anticipates the consequences of decisions.

Demonstrates consistently			
Demonstrates sometimes			
Does not demonstrate			
			Involves people appropriately in decisions that may impact them.
			Quickly responds with a back-up plan if a decision goes amiss.
Comments:			
Respect: Working effectively with others who have diverse backgrounds.			
			Demonstrates sensitivity and respect for the opinions, perspectives, customs, and individual differences of others.
			Is flexible and open-minded when dealing with a wide range of people.
			Values diversity of approaches and ideas.
Comments:			

Employee Comments

My supervisor has reviewed and discussed the performance assessment form with me. My signature means I have been advised of my performance status and does not necessarily imply that I agree with it. If I disagree with my review, I have provided an explanation of the specific areas of disagreement in the space above or on a separate page.

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C**

## Teamwork Evaluation

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the employee named above based on your interaction with them. If you have not been able to observe the behavior, please indicate not applicable (N/A). This evaluation is completely anonymous.

Results will be gathered and given to the employee. We will ask each employee to take into account feedback they have received from their team members and meet with his or her supervisor to discuss strengths and areas in need of improvement.

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	N/A
<i>Teamwork: Demonstrating the ability to work effectively with others.</i>					
Establishes a high degree of trust and credibility with others on the team.					
Interacts professionally and respectfully with all team members.					
Develops constructive relationships with team members and maintains them over time.					
Uses appropriate strategies and solutions for dealing with conflicts and differences to maintain a smooth workflow.					

What do you like best about working with this employee?

What could the employee do differently to improve as a team member?

Other comments.

## **Appendix D**

## **Listening Assessment Instructions**

Direct students to the Listening Assessment in their learner guides, allow enough time for the students to complete the assessment. After they have completed the assessment, have them study the Analysis of Results. Ask questions to get discussions started about any surprises discovered and any areas identified that need work. Advise students to take a few moments to write some tasks in their action plan.

# Listening Assessment

Read each statement and decide how that statement describes your behavior and place a check mark in the appropriate column.

STATEMENT	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. I think about why I'm listening.			
2. I maintain eye contact with the speaker.			
3. I concentrate on the message.			
4. I listen without judging or criticizing.			
5. I try to summarize the information.			
6. I give verbal and nonverbal indications that I am listening.			
7. I set a purpose for listening.			
8. I block out thoughts of personal problems.			
9. I try to predict what will come next.			
10. I take notes when needed to help remember.			
11. I ignore external distractions such as loud noises and other workers.			
12. I try to determine the speaker's purpose.			
13. I think about questions I may need to ask for clarification.			
14. I restate (paraphrase) messages to confirm my understanding.			
15. I let the speaker finish and do not interrupt.			
<b>TOTAL CHECK MARKS</b>			

## Listening Assessment Analysis of Results

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Tally the three columns. Then refer to the interpretations below.

### 14-15 Checks for Always

You are probably a fantastic listener, both at work and among your friends. Keep up the good work.

### 12-13 Checks for Always

You are a good listener but you need to fine tune a few of your listening skills. Choose behaviors to modify that you feel will easily improve your listening.

### 10-11 Checks for Always

You need to change some behaviors so that you will get more out of instructions at work. To improve your listening behaviors, you should start with any item that you checked as Never. Then move to the Sometimes column.

### 9 or Less Checks for Always OR 7 or More Checks for Never

You need to master listening skills for work success. It will be difficult to find a situation in which you will not need to use listening skills. Check with your local library for information on improving listening skills. An internet search on "listening skills" yields a number of articles, such as these at [www.about.com](http://www.about.com) and [www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com):

[http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/miscskills/a/listening\\_skill.htm](http://careerplanning.about.com/cs/miscskills/a/listening_skill.htm)

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/14657-improving-listening-skills/>

Adapted from:

[http://www.elmhurst.edu/library/learningcenter/Listening/listening\\_behaviors\\_survey.htm](http://www.elmhurst.edu/library/learningcenter/Listening/listening_behaviors_survey.htm)



# Coded Communication Exercise - Instructions

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This game can be played by one group or between two or more teams competitively. The activity is more dynamic if played in competitive teams, minimum three players per team, ideally 5-10 players per team.

The exercise involves devising and using a simple coded non-verbal (unspoken) communications system. Instructions are in the learner guide.

Equipment: A pen/pencil and paper for each team member.

- Give teams between 5-10 minutes to devise and test their codes. Large teams may require more time.
- Begin the game by showing a number (a single digit between 0-9) to the team leaders.
- You can have several rounds of the game if desired to allow students to learn from the experience.
- After each round each team member secretly writes the number on the paper for verification.

After finishing, ask questions to prompt discussion about the process and increase learning about communication and teamwork, such as the following:

- How did you decide on the method to use?
- Did one person dominate the discussion?
- Did that person appear open to different ideas?
- Were several solutions proposed?
- How did you pick the method to use?
- Did you devise means to signal lack of understanding or confirmation of message received?
- How did you make sure each person correctly received and understood the signal before communicating to the next person?
- What have you learned about teamwork and communication in this exercise?

Review points:

- It's one thing to devise a communications system or set of communications rules - it's quite another challenge to ensure everyone understands it and uses it properly.
- Vital parts of communications systems/rules work best when people can remember them, without having to refer to complicated instructions.
- Complex communications systems/rules are often very good in theory, but difficult to apply in practice because they entail an additional dimension - represented in this game by the code key - equating to a reference or instruction manual, which in real work situations people often fail to use, understand, keep updated, etc.
- Written instructions and reference guides are obviously important for quality management, but the fundamental rules of communications are best kept as simple, intuitive and memorable as possible, so that core performance is not hindered or made unnecessarily complicated.
- In terms of this exercise, conveying the communication is only half the communications process - the other half is checking the communication has been received and understood.

# Coded Communication Exercise

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## Instructions to Teams:

- Devise a secret coded (non-spoken, non-written) communication system for your team which enables a very simple piece of information - a single digit number between 0-9 - to be passed throughout the whole group/team - person to person ideally - so that everyone knows the number.
- The winning team is the first to successfully convey the number to all team members.
- The number must be conveyed using non-verbal and secret signals - it cannot be spoken, mouthed, written, signaled by holding up a number of fingers, or "tapped" using fingers or feet, etc.
- Facial expressions and eye contact are likely to be significant in non-verbal code systems developed, although teams will devise other methods.
- Whether to allow or mention touching - for example secret hand-squeezing, which teams might think to try - is at the discretion of the facilitator.
- The secret code aspect is important, if the game is played competitively and teams are given the same number to convey.
- Instruct people to write down the number after all teams have completed the round, as proof of successful communication.
- The team leader must raise his/her hand to signal to the facilitator when group/team members have received the number correctly. This potentially requires another team coded signal - to confirm successful understanding - which is a matter for the teams to decide.
- **No speaking is allowed while the game is in progress.**
- After devising and practicing the code the team leaders then return to their starting positions and await the facilitator's signal to start the game, at which the number must be communicated to all team members - **using the non-verbal secret code - person to person.**
- Teams stand in a line facing the back of the room and the back of the person in front of them. At the start signal the team lead taps the first person on the shoulder who turns and receives the communication. Once the communication is understood, the receiver turns around and taps the next person to turn around and receive the communication. This process is repeated until the last person receives the communication and signals the team lead that all team members have received the number.
- The team lead signals the instructor once assured all team members have the correct number.

## Communication

Employees should strive to be good communicators who are skilled in listening and speaking. Good communication fosters knowledge and awareness that help to prevent accidents and maintain safe workplaces. All employees must treat each other with respect and maintain a collaborative work environment. A true cooperative workplace is one that is without unlawful discrimination or harassment of any kind and provides equal opportunities for all.

As a new worker you will spend a lot of time listening to instructors, supervisors, co-workers, and mentors. It is important that you learn to listen carefully and not just hear what they are saying. Listening requires concentration and blocking out distracters, such as cell phones, nearby conversations, people walking by, and any thoughts about anything other than the conversation.

Listening is a communication process and, to be successful, it is an active process. You must be an *active participant* in this communication process. Listening requires concentration and energy. Your brain is actively working while the speaker is talking. Our thought speed is much faster than our speech speed, allowing us to work on the message being sent to us. You will be putting the message into your own words so you can tell the speaker what you have heard to make sure you have understood the real meaning. This may seem to take more time, but being certain of the message before taking action actually saves time when re-work is avoided.

### *Good Listening Skills Make Workers More Productive*

The ability to listen carefully will allow you to:

- Understand what the boss expects
- Understand what your co-workers need
- Get along better with your boss, co-workers, and company customers
- Show commitment to the goals of the boss and the team
- Work better in a team environment
- Resolve problems with your boss, co-workers, and company customers
- Provide information needed by your boss, co-workers, and company customers

The better you are at listening, the more people will listen to you. Co-workers will have more confidence in someone who is a good listener. They feel confident that you are getting the right message and will do the job right.

### *Listen Well*

Using the following tips will show the speaker you are paying attention. While you may in fact be able to listen while looking out the window, it looks like you are not listening.

- Look the speaker in the eye
- Don't interrupt the speaker
- Don't move around
- Nod your head to show you understand
- Concentrate on what you need to get from the conversation or instructions
- Repeat instructions and ask clarifying questions when the speaker has finished

### *Work on the Barriers to Listening*

Make sure the following things don't get in the way of your listening.

- Negative thoughts or attitudes about the speaker
- Language differences or accents
- Noise
- Worry, fear, or anger
- Watching other activity in the area
- Thinking of something else instead of the message

It's hard work to keep these barriers from interfering with the listening task. Concentrate on the message and repeat or paraphrase the message in your mind to help your concentration.

### *Sending Messages*

When you have something to say or instructions to provide, state your message as briefly and succinctly as possible. Listening to a rambling, unorganized speaker is tedious and discouraging. Rambling explanations are confusing to the listener and the message loses its meaning, relevance, and impact. Use this opportunity to help the listener understand your perspective and point of view. Choose words to make your message as clear as possible, avoiding jargon and unnecessary, tangential information. Rehearse to get it right before you start talking. Don't use words that can be interpreted as critical or demeaning.

# Appendix E

**Project Planning Template for Entry-level Employees**

Have you been given the responsibility to oversee a project but aren't sure where to start? While there are a variety of project planning software programs out there, for the projects that don't involve large groups of people and/or are extended over a long period of time, they may not be necessary. This template can serve as a tool to organize and get a project completed.

The elements of a project plan include:

- A project manager who oversees the project and ensures the project is completed on time.
- Project team members are the employees who are needed to get the project done.
- What are the tasks required to complete the project?
- When does each task need to be completed to ensure on-time delivery of the project?
- Who is responsible for each of the tasks?
- Since the project plan is a living document, what is the status of each task on a given day?
- Notes section to record any special resources required to complete each task, nuances, etc.

Project Manager:

Project Team Members:

Project Completion Date:

Task	Responsible Team Member	Target Date	Status	Notes