

EmployAbility Success!

...Using skills to find a job and keep a job

By Karen Farrar

Timmins Learning Centre

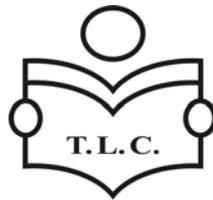


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Acknowledgements

Project Overview

In 2008 District School Board Ontario North East (DSBONE) received funding from the Ministry of Education aimed at modelling effective partnering between agencies. Anglophone, Francophone, First Nation, schoolboard, college and community based agencies met with the aim of developing new partnerships and enhancing existing ones. Projects were to aid learners to make more effective transitions to either further education or employment. Timmins Learning Centre created this project, *EmployAbility Success!* to help fill in the gaps for learners seeking employment or further training after upgrading in their literacy program. Upon completion of these modules learners can access employment services such as Job Connect and Career Link and be more successful not only at getting a job but keeping it. This project will be shared with school board, college and community based, francophone, anglophone and Native literacy programs.

Timmins Learning Centre would like to thank Denise Tremblay of the Iroquois Falls/Cochrane Adult Learning Centre and Sue Hughes of the South Temiskaming Learning Centre for being on board with this project from the beginning. Their insights and experience have contributed to the value and usefulness of *EmployAbility Success!* Thanks also to Michelle Leigh from DSBONE in Timmins for her support of this project.

Practitioner Introduction

This is an eight module curriculum designed to enhance and improve your students' "soft" employability skills. As you are no doubt aware, these skills are challenging to teach for a number of reasons:

- There are few available teaching materials.
- The skills are difficult to measure.
- The skills are nebulous and difficult to impart as discrete elements.

This curriculum makes reference to the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills, which can be found at: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/education/learning-tools/employability-skills.htm>

The curriculum is not intended as a complete guide to soft employability skills. Instead, it focuses on these skills with the understanding that:

- These skills are in fact as essential for employment as are reading, writing and math.
- Students can learn and improve these skills.
- Soft skills can be identified with examples in both a résumé and job interview.

The curriculum is written at around LBS level three, but transitioning level two learners should be able to use the material as well.

The strength and efficacy of this curriculum are undergirded by:

- The scenario format of the learning materials
- The questions embedded throughout the text
- An activity that encourages the use of a specific skill or skills
- The discussion that takes place after a scenario and module are completed

The scenario format

The scenario format is essentially a "work story" that enables learners to enter into the situations that the characters are experiencing. The characters in the story are LBS learners who have recently moved on to employment. Learners will find these characters engaging and will be able to identify with the situations and quandaries they face. This kind of interaction encourages learners to think like they actually have jobs. It might be helpful, if you have more than one learner working through the curriculum, to have them read the parts in the scenario to bring the characters to life.

Questions embedded throughout text

The questions in this material are very important. Learners should be encouraged to reflect on and answer all of them and be prepared to discuss their answers when they have finished each scenario. Furthermore, learners are encouraged to come up with their own questions about the scenario, the characters, or the skills they are learning. The questions aid in heuristic learning, which is “to discover things for oneself”. This kind of reflective and experiential thinking is one of the most important lifelong learning skills that is needed in our rapidly changing world – particularly the world of work.

Activity

Each module includes at least one activity that allows the learner to use a specific employability skill in a work context. The activities are real life work situations that will help the learner to gauge how well he or she can use or integrate these skills.

Post-scenario and post-module discussions

One of the key ways that learners will integrate and reflect on this material is through discussing their insights and opinions with others. The ideal situation would be a small group of learners led by an instructor or volunteer tutor. However, if you only have one learner working through this curriculum, he or she should have time to discuss the completed modules with an instructor or volunteer tutor. **This curriculum is not intended for independent study.** Many soft skills have a social element to them and all are enriched through sharing insights and conversation.

In addition to these methods, websites and other training material are included in each module. As well, there are websites embedded in each module for further study. The learner has the opportunity to rate his or her employability skills both before and after completing each module.

A note on Employability Skills vs. Essential Skills

When learners work on employability skills they are also working on Essential Skills. Encourage them to visit the Essential Skill and Ontario Skills Passport websites to see how the skills overlap.

srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/learner.shtml

skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/login.jsp

The instructor or tutor should be familiar with the curriculum, including the introduction. Therefore, along with these practitioner guidelines, he or she should read the module and learner instructions as well.

Good luck with teaching your learners these invaluable skills for life and work!

Practitioner Guidelines for Modules

Module One

If you have not already done so, please read the module.

There is one role play after the first scenario. Another learner, a practitioner or volunteer tutor will act the part of a bakery customer.

Here is the information the learner has for the role play.

- Bagels 60 cents each or 6/\$3.00
- Muffins large \$1.25 each or 6/\$6.50
- Muffins small 75 cents each or 6/\$4.00

Ask the learner questions about these baked goods. Here are some sample questions.

Do you have any muffins?

What kinds do you have?

How much are they?

Do you have any bagels?

The learner should use effective speaking skills and good customer service.

Discussion

After each scenario begins a conversation about the communication skills in this module.

Encourage learners to give their opinions. Get them to talk about the examples and answers that they have given throughout the module.

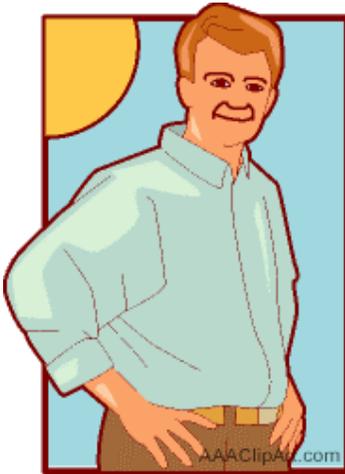
The purpose of the discussion is to engage learners in a reflective process about their own employability skills, specifically speaking and listening.

Introduction to *Employability Success!*

Are you thinking about looking for a job? Have you been improving your reading, writing and math skills to find work? If so, this manual is for you. Here you will read about Jerry, Erica and Keith who have been upgrading their skills at the Centre for Upgrading and Employability Skills (CUES). These three students have been improving their reading, writing and math skills. Now they feel like they are ready to find work. In this manual you will join Jerry, Erica and Keith as they prepare for employment. Then you will see how they use their skills on the job. All of you will be learning some new skills and reviewing skills you already know about. By the time you have finished the modules in this manual you will be closer to enjoying *Employability Success!*

Meet Three Students from CUES: The Centre for Upgrading and Employability Skills

Meet Jerry



Jerry is about fifty years old. For many years he worked in mining. He liked his job and almost never took any time off work. One day he had a bad fall at a mine. He landed on his back and had to take over a month off of work. After x-raying his back, the specialist told him that he would not be able to work in the mine. He would have to find a new career.

Jerry's boss tried to help him find a new job in mining. He suggested that Jerry might like to work in mine safety, but Jerry said no. Jerry was too embarrassed to tell his boss that his reading was not good enough for understanding the safety manuals he would need to study to work as a safety officer.

Jerry received a pension because of his injury, but he wasn't happy. He liked to keep busy. Staying home was boring, and all of his friends worked all day. He began to feel very depressed. His worker suggested that he try CUES to upgrade his reading, writing and math skills for work.

"Why not?" said Jerry, "Better than sitting around the house all day."

Now Jerry has been at CUES for about a year. His reading, writing and math skills have improved and he has even learned how to use a computer! Jerry felt proud of his achievements. He thought he was ready to go out and find a new job, but he was afraid to try. He had been off work for more than two years and felt out of touch.

Meet Erica



Erica started upgrading at CUES when she was 18, but quit after she got pregnant. She returned to CUES when her little girl was two and she has made a lot of progress in the time she has been there.

Erica thought that she might like to get a job. So far, she had only ever worked in child care. Now that she had her own daughter, she wanted to do something else. Erica did not make enough money babysitting to support herself and her daughter. She did not always want to be on Ontario Works.

The trouble was, Erica did not know what she could do. She had never worked outside of her home, and she did not know what kind of job she might be good at. She wanted to talk to her instructor, Lisa, about this problem, so she stayed behind in the classroom after everyone else had packed up their books and left.

“Lisa, could I talk to you for a minute?” she asked shyly.

“Sure you can, Erica. What’s up?” said Lisa.

“I’ve been thinking I’d like to get a job,” said Erica in her soft voice.

“That’s great to hear. Your work here has been excellent. I’m sure you can find something you would like to do. Do you have any ideas?” said Lisa.

“Not really,” said Erica.

“That’s all right,” said Lisa cheerfully. “I’ll give you a good website to check out. It may help you discover what it is you would like to do.”

Erica smiled. When she first started at CUES she hadn’t even known how to turn a computer on! Now she loved to surf the net and find interesting sites on parenting and children. She emailed photos of her daughter to relatives and chatted with friends on MSN and Facebook. Now the computer was going to help her find out about work, too.

It didn’t take long before Erica found some interesting occupations. But now what, she wondered. I’ve never even looked for a job – I don’t know where to start!

Log on to the site that Erica used to help her discover more about the kind of work she wanted to do. Do some of the quizzes to help you discover more about your work strengths, interests and abilities.

http://www.jobsetc.ca/toolbox/quizzes/quizzes_home.do?lang=e

More help with finding an occupation. Go to *Ontario Skills Passport* at <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/introduction.jsp>

Click on ‘Create a Transition Plan’ and follow the instructions.

Meet Keith

Keith was close in age to Erica, but he couldn't be more different! Erica had almost no work experience and Keith had too much. Keith had quit school when he was 16. Since then he has worked as a busboy, at a car wash, at fast food counters, and as a helper to some trades people. Keith's problem was that he could never keep any of these jobs. It seemed that either he got angry and quit or he was fired. Once he managed to keep a job in logging for a few months, but he was laid off before the end of the season. After that Keith had gone on Ontario Works. He had a few friends on OW too. Sometimes they would play pool together in the afternoon. One day Keith called his friend Pete to play pool.



“I can't,” said Peter, “I'm going back to school.”

“What?” Keith yelled into the phone. “Are you crazy? Why are you doing that?”

“I found out I can upgrade my math and then maybe get on as an apprentice at my uncle's construction company. I used to work for him in the summers and really liked it. Anyway, I have to go. Maybe we can get together Friday night.”

“Yeah, maybe,” said Keith.

Keith didn't phone Pete that Friday night, but he saw him a few months later.

“Hey, how's it going?” asked Keith.

“Great!” said Pete. “I'm nearly finished my math upgrading at CUES and will be starting work with my uncle in the spring.”

“Cues, what's that?” asked Keith.

“I told you I was going back to school. Well, that’s where I went. It’s pretty good there – no kids and you can work at your own pace. You should try it!”

“Yeah, maybe,” said Keith.

It took Keith a few more months to get up the nerve to check out CUES. The fact was that Keith had always hated school. He could remember the principal’s office even better than his classroom. However, CUES was different. No one was telling him what to do all the time. This took some getting used to, but Keith found that he was pretty good at getting things done on his own.

Now Keith had been at CUES for more than a year, and he felt restless. He looked at the daily paper in class and checked out the employment ads. He saw some jobs that he thought he could do. But this time, Keith wanted a job he could keep. I’d like to work, he thought, but I don’t want some jerk telling me what to do all the time!

Jerry, Erica and Keith are very different people who share one thing in common: they want to go to work. Yet for different reasons they don’t feel confident about getting (or in Keith’s case keeping) a job.

Lisa, the class instructor at CUES, knew that Jerry, Erica and Keith were interested in finding work. She asked them if they were making any plans about job search.

“I’ve got some buddies at the mine who said they would look out for something for me,” said Jerry.

“I’m still working on that web site,” mumbled Erica.

Keith looked out the window and didn’t say anything.

Lisa looked at them thoughtfully.

“You have all made excellent progress in reading, writing and math,” she said. “That’s the upgrading part that we teach at CUES. How about we work some more on the other skills we teach?”

Three blank faces stared at her.

“CUES,” she said. “C.U.E.S. What do the letters stand for?”

Jerry, Erica and Keith exchanged glances.

“Uh, Centre for Upgrading and Employment Services?” said Keith.

“Employment Skills,” Jerry corrected.

“Close,” said Lisa. “It’s actually **Employability** Skills.”

“Same difference,” said Keith.

“Similar,” Lisa agreed. “But let’s take a closer look at the word.”

Lisa went up to the chalkboard and wrote **Employability** in large letters.

“See anything strange about this word?” she asked. Lisa took her piece of chalk and drew a line down the middle of the word so that it looked like this:

Employ/ability

“It’s actually two words together: employ and ability. Employability really means the ability to be and stay employed.”

Employability Skills

Employability Skills aren’t only taught by CUES. You can learn employability skills where you are right now. The rest of this manual is about key employability skills.

The Conference Board of Canada says that Employability Skills are:

The skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work – whether you work on your own or as a part of a team.

Here is a list of the employability skills that the Conference Board of Canada has identified.

Fundamental Skills The skills needed as a base for further development.

- Communicate
- Manage Information
- Use Numbers
- Think and Solve Problems
-

Personal Management Skills The personal skills, attitudes and behaviours that encourage growth and progress.

- Demonstrate Positive Attitudes and Behaviours
- Be Responsible
- Be Adaptable
- Learn Continuously
- Work Safely

Teamwork Skills The skills needed to contribute productively.

- Work with Others
- Participate in Projects and Tasks

After Lisa had gone over the Employability Skills, she asked the students if they had any questions or comments.

“Yeah,” said Keith. “It looks like the foundational skills are about reading, writing and math. We already know lots of this stuff. I’m not doing it all over again!”

“That’s right,” said Jerry, and Erica nodded.

“Of course not,” said Lisa, “You will just work on the skills that we haven’t yet covered. You might find that some of the employability skills are pretty easy for you, or you will just think that they are common sense. You won’t have to spend much time on those ones. Others might be more difficult. Here are some readings and assignments to get you started. Why don’t we meet again this time next week to see how you have done?”

Meet Lisa

Lisa had been teaching at CUES for several years. She liked working with adults because she found that they usually worked harder and were more serious about completing their work than children. She liked the fact that they shared similar responsibilities with her: family obligations, getting to school on time and managing on a tight budget to name a few. When Lisa first started working at CUES, she worked only part-time. Nonetheless, she worked very hard and took her job seriously. She always tried to be available when the full-time instructor was sick or away. When that full-time job came up, Lisa applied. Two other part-time staff also applied. They were also very good instructors, but they had not shown the kind of commitment to the job that Lisa had. One employee had never been willing to come in for extra hours if she was needed. The other employee would come in but not make much effort with the students because, as he put it, he was just “filling in”. When it came to the full-time position, there was really no contest: Lisa had the right skills and the right attitude for the job.



All three part-time staff, including Lisa, were very good instructors. Why did Lisa get the job?

Now Lisa was working on employability skills with Jerry, Lisa and Keith. They would meet together to review the work that they had done each week on specific employability skills. The three students worked hard on the material and practised their skills both in and out of class.

One day Lisa said, “Congratulations! Here is the last module,” and she passed around some stapled pages.

This last module was on preparing a resumé and job interview skills.

“When you are finished this module, you can photocopy your resumé and begin looking for work,” said Lisa. “Now you can be confident that you have the skills to get working!”

Jerry found work almost right away in an auto parts company. His new computer skills and improved reading were essential abilities for the job. However when his boss interviewed him, he was also impressed by Jerry’s responses to questions around problem solving. Problem solving is an important skill for work.

It took Erica a little longer, but she also found a job, working in a bakery. Erica had been working hard on her communication skills, so when the interviewer asked her about serving customers, she was able to answer confidently. Before she had practised her speaking skills, Erica would not have believed that she would be able to get through an interview successfully.

Keith was having difficulty deciding whether or not he wanted to just begin work or try for an apprenticeship like his buddy, Pete. When a labourer’s job came up he decided to apply for it. That way he figured he would have a better sense of the construction business. Keith had worked hard on having a positive attitude toward work and working as part of a team. He realised that his attitude and quick temper had had a lot to do with his inability to keep a job.

Jerry, Erica and Keith had learned a lot about employability skills in their last few months at CUES. Let’s see how they manage these skills on the job. At the same time, take the opportunity to think about how you would respond to the situations that these three workers find themselves in. Try to put yourself in their place in the scenarios that follow. Would you do things the same way as they did? How would you be different? Also, be sure to answer each question thoughtfully as you come to it. The questions are there to help you absorb and reflect on the material you are learning. Good luck with your employability skills!

Learner's Instructions for Module One

1. Read the material slowly and carefully.
2. As much as you are able, put yourself in the place of Jerry, Erica or Keith. Imagine that you are working at their job and facing the same challenges and situations.
3. Answer all of the questions! This is very important. Your answers will form part of the discussion you have after you have completed the scenarios.
4. Some questions may have more than one answer and more than one right answer! Make sure you try and answer these questions from your point of view.
5. Each module will have at least one activity. Be sure to tell your instructor when you are working on an activity.
6. Write down any questions you have about the skills you are learning or the scenarios. Bring these questions to the discussion.

Remember: Employability skills are the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work – whether you work on your own or as part of a team.

These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities.

Module One Employability Skills: Communication

Speak so others pay attention and understand

Listen and ask questions to understand the points of view of others

Before you read:

A. Reflect on your speaking skills

1. Who do you speak to everyday? Make a list of a few of these people here.

2. Do you speak to everyone the same way? For example, do you speak to your partner or family member the same way you do to a stranger? Explain your answer.

3. Do you like to use the phone? Why or why not?

4. Give two examples of how you think the speaking skills you use everyday are important for work.

B. Reflect on your listening skills

1. When you listen, do you look at the person who is speaking?

2. Do you listen to talk shows on the radio or computer? Why or why not?

3. Do you sometimes find your mind wanders or you are thinking of something else when you are supposed to be listening?

4. Give two examples of how the listening skills you use everyday are important for work.

C. Rate your skills

Rate yourself on your speaking and listening skills.

1 = I need to learn this.

2 = I need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Communication Employability Skills	1	2	3
Are you comfortable and confident speaking to people you don't know?			
Do people understand you when you talk to them?			
Can you get your point across clearly and concisely when you're trying to explain something?			
Do you speak loudly enough for people to hear you easily?			
Do you understand that not all topics should be discussed in the workplace?			
Do you understand what others are talking about when they speak to you?			
Are you able to ask questions to improve your understanding?			
Do you understand others' points of view, even if they are different from yours?			
Can you listen to people without interrupting?			
Do you remember what people tell you?			

Scenarios

The scenarios that follow are about Erica and Keith, the students you met at CUES. They have completed their upgrading and have improved their employability skills. Now they have jobs! You will see them at work and watch how they use the employability skills of speaking and listening.

Scenario One – Speaking Skills



Erica has been working at Dough Dude Bakery for about two weeks. She has learned many new skills on the job. She likes the head baker, Sam. Like Erica, he doesn't talk too much. His wife, Edna, is very chatty, and Erica likes her too. Edna usually deals with the customers and operates the cash register.

One day, Edna said, "Erica, it will soon be Easter and we are always very busy the week before Easter. I would like to teach you to use the cash register so that you will be able to help me at the front counter. There will be too many customers for me to manage on my own." Erica agreed, but inside she felt very nervous.

A few weeks before Easter Erica learned how to use the cash. She had practised counting back **change** while at CUES, and Edna was very pleased with how quickly she caught on to using the cash. But this wasn't the employability skill that Erica worried about. Her challenge was:

- Speaking to people she didn't know
- Getting her point across so that people understood her
- Speaking loudly enough for others to understand

Although Erica was not yet comfortable with these skills, she had practised them a lot while at CUES. Lisa had got Erica to practise these skills in a number of ways.

Erica practised reading out loud. At first she did this in a room by herself. Then when she was ready, she would read aloud to Lisa. Next, Lisa had her join a small group of other students who were practising their reading skills. Erica read well, but she needed practice saying things out loud. Reading out loud in a group increased her confidence.

Erica used a tape recorder. This had been an extremely challenging exercise for Erica. She and Lisa would have a conversation, which Lisa would tape. The first few times that Lisa played back their conversations, Erica could only hear Lisa's voice. Her own voice did not sound at all! She quickly realised that she would have to make an effort to speak in a clearer and louder voice.

Erica practised at home. Erica did not feel self-conscious talking to family members and close friends. She began to speak more clearly and loudly to her daughter. She read to her more often, consciously saying the words in a clear voice.

Erica learned about good communication. Erica had not realised how important good speaking skills were to getting a job. She thought Lisa had been exaggerating the importance of speaking skills because Erica was so shy. Lisa had not argued with her. Instead she had suggested that Erica do her own research about good speaking skills for work. Here are some of the websites that she suggested Erica look at.

<http://www.find-your-dream-career.com/shyness.html>

http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/gihe/griffith_graduate/toolkit/oral/why.htm

<http://teachingteams.arizona.edu/docs/OralCommunication.pdf>

It took some time, but Erica began to get used to the sound of her own voice. People in class did not think she was weird or funny when she spoke.

Now here she was at Dough Dude Bakery feeling the same kind of fear she had when she first started to read aloud to Lisa. She remembered that Lisa had told her that it was normal to feel nervous the first few times of doing something new. Erica looked at the customer across the counter. Edna had gone into the back of the bakery and was speaking to Sam. The customer was holding a pair of tongs and looking at the selection of bagels. While the customer plucked bagels from the bins, Erica reviewed what she had learned about speaking skills for work.

Speaking on the Job

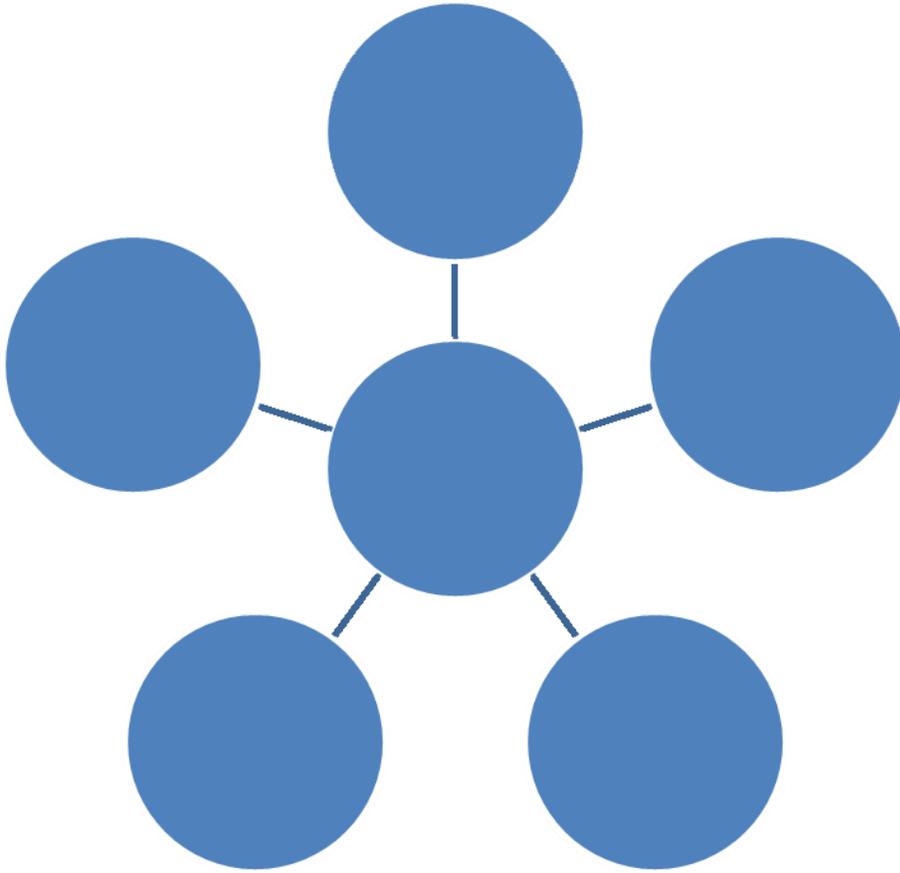
When you are on the job you need to be able to:

- Speak to people that you don't know
- Speak so that people understand you
- Get your point across clearly and concisely
- Speak loudly enough for people to hear
- Talk about subjects that are appropriate to the workplace

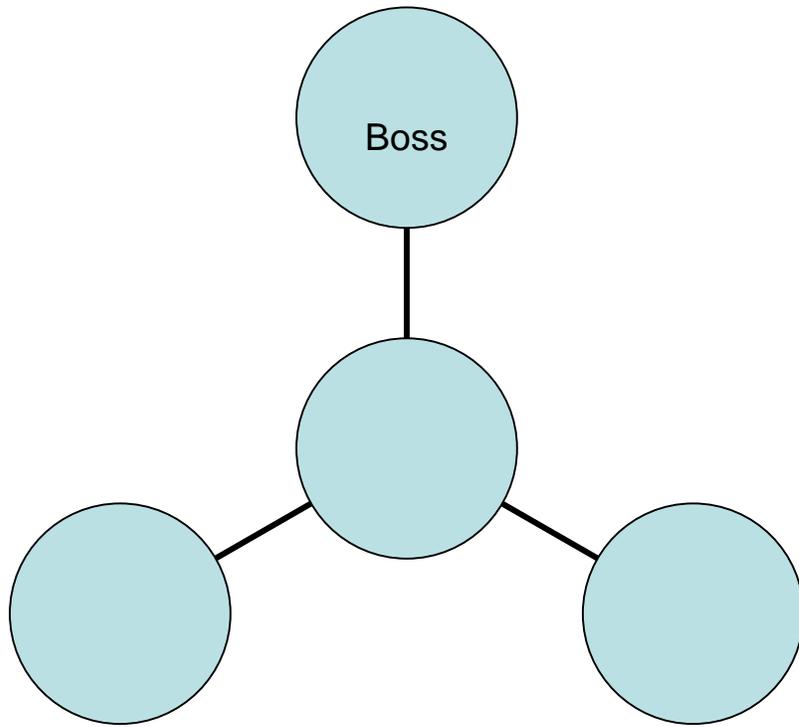
All of these skills can be practised before you get a job.

Speak to people you don't know

We spend most of our time talking to people that we know. Look at the diagram below. Put your own name in the middle. Now fill in the other spaces with the names of people you speak to most often.



On the next diagram, imagine yourself on the job. Who are the people you might have to speak to at work? Put your name in the middle. To get you started, one person is already filled in for you.



Compare your two diagrams. Which group of people is it easier to speak to? Why?

Usually, we have more difficulty speaking to people we don't know. When you first start your job, you won't know your boss or co-workers very well. You can begin now to practise speaking with people who you don't know very well. Here are some examples of people to speak with.

- Your instructor or other instructors where you are learning
- Other students
- Volunteers who work at your school
- Salespeople in stores
- Bank clerks

Speak so that others understand you

When people speak to you, do you always understand them? Not likely. There can be a number of reasons why we don't understand others or they don't understand us. Here are a few examples:

- Accent
- Poor pronunciation
- Mumbling
- Too fast
- Facing away from the person

Ask someone you trust to be honest about how easy you are to understand. All of the above barriers to clear speech can be overcome with practice. Try speaking slowly, pronouncing words carefully. Good speakers stand straight so that their voices project more clearly.

Give a work place example of the importance of speaking so others understand you.

Get your point across clearly and concisely

Sometimes we find ourselves in conversations with people where we understand the *words*, but we don't understand what they are saying. When you speak **clearly**, people know what it is you are talking about. When you speak **concisely**, you are not using too many words to get your point across. Here again, it pays to practise ahead of time. For example, if you have to explain to your supervisor why it is important for you to work an evening shift instead of a day shift, then tell yourself out loud first. Next, practise with a partner or friend. Make sure that you are not talking too much and wasting your supervisor's time. Make sure that you are giving your supervisor enough information so that your request makes sense.

Give a work place example of the importance of getting your point across clearly and concisely.

Speak loudly enough so that others can hear you – but not too loudly!

Sometimes when we are not confident about what we are saying or how we are saying it, we will not speak loudly enough. Think about what happens when you communicate with others. Do they often ask you to repeat yourself? If so, it's time to speak up!

It is important to speak loudly enough but not too loudly. If you are not loud enough it is annoying for your listener who will either misunderstand you or ask you to repeat yourself. If you are too loud, people might think you are aggressive or angry. Practise for balance.

Practise speaking in a loud enough voice to friends and family. Then move on to people you don't know.

Why is it important to speak loudly but not too loudly at work?

Talk about subjects that are appropriate to the workplace

It is important to recognize that what we talk about with our family and friends might not be appropriate for conversation at work. Read the following topics of conversation. Put a tick mark in the box that best describes where you could talk about this topic.

Topics of Conversation	At home	At work	Either
An argument you had with your partner before work			
The price of gas			
Last night's hockey game			
Medical appointment during work hours			
The reason for your medical appointment			
Job safety training			

Back at work with Erica

Erica took a deep breath as the customer came towards her with a large bag of bagels. Here are the steps she took to make sure that she used good speaking skills.

1. Consciously, Erica made eye contact with the customer and smiled.
2. She made sure that she was standing straight and facing the customer.
3. Her voice was loud enough for the customer to easily hear her.
4. Erica spoke clearly and tried not to hurry her speech.

The customer smiled back and asked for a loaf of rye bread. He commented on the heavy rain and cold weather. Erica agreed that the weather was terrible. She knew that everybody talked about the weather, and it was good manners to respond. She put the loaf of rye bread in a bag and then put the sale through the register. Finally, Erica thanked the customer.

That wasn't so bad after all, she thought to herself.

Activity: Role Play

You work for Dough Dude Bakery and your instructor or a volunteer will play the part of a customer. Use good speaking skills for work when responding to the customer.

Here is the information you will need for the role play.



Bagels 60 cents each or 6/\$3.00

Muffins large \$1.25 each or 6/\$6.50

Muffins small 75 cents each or 6/\$4.00

Reflection

Before you read through this scenario, you rated your employability skills for communication. Now rate them again using the scale below.

Rate yourself on your speaking skills.

1 = This skill is still very difficult for me.

2 = I understand this skill better but need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Oral Communication Employability Skills	1	2	3
Are you comfortable and confident speaking to people you don't know?			
Do people understand you when you talk to them?			
Can you get your point across clearly and concisely when you're trying to explain something?			
Do you speak loudly enough for people to hear you easily?			
Do you understand that not all topics should be discussed in the workplace?			

After reading this module has your awareness of the importance of speaking skills increased? In your own words explain why good speaking skills are important for work.

Have your own speaking skills improved? Give an example of your effective speaking skills.

If you have not yet mastered this skill and need more practice, ask your instructor for more materials for you to practise with. Or, check out the internet for sites on improving your oral communication skills. If you have not yet done so, check out the three sites given earlier in this lesson.

Scenario Two – Listening Skills



Keith was working for Straight Path Construction. Usually he did a lot of digging and lifting. It was hard work, but Keith liked working outside. Right now, Straight Path Construction was working on a residential street, replacing sewer and water pipes. The back hoe was doing most of the work, but on some of the lawns they were digging close to the gas lines, and the digging had to be done by hand.

Keith and his fellow worker, Jason, were shovelling on one lawn where the back hoe had left off. The grass was beautifully groomed and there wasn't a weed in sight. An old man came out waving his hands at them.

“Hey, careful!” he cried, “Why do you have to make such a mess?”

Keith glared at him. Couldn't the old coot see they were just doing the job? He was just deciding which four-letter word to use when Jason spoke up.

“It looks terrible, doesn't it?” he agreed. “Don't worry, though. When we're finished we will replace all of the sod that we've dug up. You won't know we've been here.”

The old man stayed for a few more minutes watching them dig. Keith kept his head down and dug harder. He was angry with himself. I nearly blew it, he thought. After all that work I did on listening skills too! As he dug, Keith reviewed in his mind some of the things he had learned about good listening.

Listening on the Job

Good listening skills are essential to good communication. Listening is not the same as hearing. When we hear something, it might be just noise. When we listen, we are trying to hear and understand. Review basic listening skills by going to:

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/listeningskills1.html>

<http://stress.about.com/od/relationships/ht/howtolisten.htm>

Understand what others are talking about

When we are in conversation with someone, we can usually understand what they're talking about. This is especially the case if we are talking about a topic that we are both familiar with.

However, it is different if someone is telling us something that we know little or nothing about. What might be easy for them isn't for us. For example, imagine if your instructor started talking to you about a new kind of math that you had never seen. You might understand some of the things your instructor was saying, but if you had never seen or done that kind of math, you wouldn't understand much. What could you do? You might look up the math on the Internet or check your own math textbook. If you learned a little bit more about this kind of math, it would help you the next time your instructor wanted to discuss it. Knowing something about a topic always helps us to listen and understand better.

Similarly, what might you do if your employer told you on Friday that you would be receiving training on customer service on Monday? It would be a good idea to do a bit of research ahead of time. Knowing something about a topic ahead of time helps you to listen and better understand new information about that topic. Our understanding of any topic greatly improves if we already have some knowledge.

Give a work place example of the importance of understanding what others are talking about. Give an example of how you might prepare if you didn't know very much about what your co-workers were discussing.

Understand others' points of view

Sometimes we can experience the same thing as someone else but have a different point of view. You might see a movie that you really like that your partner didn't enjoy at all. You might be glad that it's raining because your lawn is dry, but someone else is upset because they planned a picnic. In these situations, no one is right or wrong; they just have different points of view. It is important to be able to hear another's point of view and see things the way that they do. It doesn't mean you need to change your mind about how you feel about something. It just means you have a better understanding about how they feel and see things.

Think back to Jason and Keith on the old man's front lawn. From their point of view, Jason and Keith were doing their job. What was happening from the old man's point of view?

Jason was able to understand and agree with the old man and still do his job. Seeing another's point of view doesn't mean that you have to give up your own. Hearing and accepting another's point of view is an important listening skill.

Give an example of the importance of understanding the points of view of others in the work place.

Ask questions to improve your understanding

We won't always understand something the first time we hear it. We may have to ask a person to repeat themselves, or we may have to ask questions to improve our understanding. For example, if someone is giving you directions to their house and tells you to turn at the corner, you will probably have to ask, Turn left or right? Asking questions to clarify meaning is an important listening skill.

Give an example of how asking questions to improve understanding is an important work place skill.

Listen without interrupting

Everyone has a right to finish what he or she is saying without having us interrupt them. We might disagree with what they are saying and they might make us angry, but we should still wait until they are finished to say so. Listening without interruption is not only an important communication skill, it's also good manners.

Give a work place example of the importance of listening without interrupting.

Remember what people say

Imagine you were going to a job interview and you were wondering to yourself, "Did they say two o'clock or three? Or suppose you were given the name of a supervisor to hand your resume to, and you couldn't remember it. It's important to be able to remember what people say to you, especially at work. If you don't have a good memory for names and dates, write them down. Lots of people have poor memories, so there is nothing wrong with writing things down. It's far better than forgetting!

Give a work place example of the importance of remembering what people say.

Back at work with Keith

"Hey! Hey, Keith!" Keith looked up. He had been so busy with his thoughts, he hadn't noticed his foreman, Louie, standing in front of him. Jason had disappeared. "I thought I told you guys to finish up across the street first! You shouldn't have started here before you filled in the hole there."

Keith kept his mouth firmly shut. He had wanted to interrupt and defend himself, but he decided to let the foreman have his say. Keith realised that here was a situation where there were different points of view. He waited to be sure that the foreman had finished and said,

“Yeah, I know you told us to fill in the hole and we started to, but Danny told us they hadn’t finished over there yet. He still has to replace the pipe. We figured we should start here instead.”

“Oh! Okay then, well, next time let me know,” said Louie the foreman, and he walked away.

Keith shrugged and went back to work. Sure, he thought, Louie had been in the wrong. He had got angry with Keith about something that wasn’t his fault. But Keith knew that he didn’t have to get mad just because the foreman had been angry with him. Keith was beginning to feel really good about his ability to control his temper.

Activity



1. You work for Straight Path Construction. Your co-worker tells you that you need to start filling in a hole with gravel. Your foreman tells you to start work across the street. What do you do and why?

2. You have to take some equipment to another site where Straight Path Construction is working. Because it is complicated, your boss gives you precise details about how to get there. What should you do?

Reflection

Before you read through this scenario, you rated your employability skills for communication. Now rate your listening skills again using the scale below.

Rate yourself on your listening skills.

1 = This skill is still very difficult for me.

2 = I understand this skill better but need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Listening Communication Employability Skills	1	2	3
Do you understand what others are talking about when they speak to you?			
Do you understand others' points of view, even if they are different from yours?			
Can you listen to people without interrupting?			
Do you remember what people tell you?			

After reading through this module, do you have a better understanding of the importance of listening skills on the job? In your own words explain why good listening is important at work.

Do you think that your own listening skills are improved? Give an example of one of your good listening skills.

If you have not yet mastered this skill and need more practice, ask your instructor for more materials for you to practise with. Or, check out the Internet for sites on improving your listening skills.

For extra practice, try these online listening activities:

http://www.exploratorium.edu/listen/online_try.php

Go to the Learning Edge and load issue six. Click on the Communicate for Success icon to watch and listen to how one worker communicates on the job.

<http://www.thewclc.ca/edge/issue6/index1.html>

Go to the Learning Edge and load issue seven.

<http://www.thewclc.ca/edge/issue7/index.html>

Communication - conclusion

If you want to improve your speaking and listening employability skills you can:

- Ask your instructor for more materials
- Visit or re-visit one of the websites that offer tips on speaking and listening
- Practise your speaking and listening skills everywhere!
 - With family and friends
 - While shopping
 - Ordering in restaurants
 - On the phone
 - In class

Remember that employability skills are transferrable from the work place to the other areas of your life like home and community. Give two examples of how good communication is important in other parts of your life.

Remember: Employability skills are the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work – whether you work on your own or as part of a team.

These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities.

Module Two Employability Skills: Think and Solve Problems

The ability to **Think and Solve Problems** is an essential employability skill. Employers look for workers who can solve problems on the job. They do not appreciate having small problems brought to them that employees should be able to solve themselves. At the same time, employers do not expect their employees to solve all problems on the job. An important part of problem solving is knowing when the problem is yours to solve and when you should pass it on to a supervisor or your employer.

Before you read:

A. Reflect on your problem solving skills

What do you do when you are faced with a problem between you and a friend or family member?

What do you do when you are doing something you enjoy and a problem comes up?

What kind of problems might come up at work? Give two examples and explain how they are problems.

B. Rate your skills

Rate yourself on your skills to think and solve problems.

1 = I need to learn this.

2 = I need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Skills to Think and Solve Problems	1	2	3
Do you understand the difference between reacting to a problem and thinking about it?			
Can you define a problem and see it from different angles?			
When solving problems, can you ask for and accept input from others?			
Are you able to try out different solutions?			
Are you able to figure out which is the best solution?			

Scenarios

The scenarios that follow are about Erica and Jerry. As you know, Erica is working at Dough Dude Bakery. Jerry is working at Swift Auto Parts. Let's see how well these former CUES students manage when it comes to thinking to solve problems.

Scenario One – Jerry Thinks about a Problem

Jerry had been working at Swift Auto Parts for about two months. Along with two other guys he worked on the front counter most of the time. People would come into the shop and ask for parts for their cars. Jerry would need to know the make and model before he could look up the parts. All of the auto parts were entered into a computer system. Jerry would enter in the part as well as the make and model of the car. The computer would tell him whether or not they had the part in stock and how much it was. As well, he could print out an invoice and do the cash transactions on the computer. The parts were kept in a large storage room behind the front counter. Jerry would check the stock on the computer screen. If they had the part in stock, the computer also told him in which aisle and section in the stockroom he could find the part. Jerry knew that he never would have got the job at Swift if he had not learned computer skills at CUES.



One day Jerry was working at the front counter. He was entering in some inventory on the computer. He had a box of starter solenoid switches from Ford for their 1970 to 1973 Mustangs.

“Well look at that!” exclaimed a man who had walked up to the counter. “I need one of those for my ’72 Mustang. How much are they?”

“I’m just checking that now,” said Jerry. He inputted six solenoids into the computer and the price appeared beside them. “They’re \$74.95 apiece.”

“I guess I’ll wait until payday. I’ll be back next Friday,” said the man.

Jerry found that time passed a lot faster now that he had a job. He was beginning to memorize certain auto parts – how much they were and where they were kept. He had thought he knew a lot about cars, but since working at Swift, he was learning even more.

It seemed like no time at all before the next Friday rolled around. The same man who had been in the shop the previous week came in again.

“I’ll take one of those solenoids for my ’72 Mustang,” he said.

Jerry nodded. He brought up the part and make and model of the car. They had received six solenoids the previous week. According to the inventory on the computer, they had already sold two. Jerry went into the back and headed down the correct aisle for the solenoid. He lifted the box down and frowned. There were only two solenoids left. He looked behind the box, but the shelf was empty. He took a solenoid and walked slowly out to the front.

Jerry put the sale through and thanked the customer.

For the rest of the day they were very busy. Jerry took his lunch and then came back to relieve Ron who was also working on the counter. When Rob returned from lunch the two of them worked steadily until it was time to close.

“You’re pretty quiet today,” said Ron as he put the closed sign in the window. “Everything okay?”

“Oh, yeah, yeah, everything’s fine,” said Jerry.

After supper his wife asked him the same thing.

“Are you all right?”

“Of course! Why wouldn’t you think I’m all right?” Jerry demanded.

“You just sprinkled salt on your chocolate pudding,” she said.

After his coffee (he didn't eat the chocolate pudding) Jerry went for a walk. No doubt about it, he thought to himself, two solenoids had gone missing. He walked around the block and then went back into the house. Nothing to do with me, he thought.

But Jerry wasn't able to dismiss the missing solenoids from his mind. He tossed and turned in bed that night; his mind was divided.

One side of Jerry's mind told him not to get involved. This was the way it had always been in his old job. Keep your head down and mind your own business, had been his motto. Jerry remembered his first boss, Tom, at the mine. Tom had not appreciated anything but hard work from the miners. So Jerry had learned to keep his mouth shut and mind his own business. Even when he worked in the union, he still kept his thoughts to himself.

Jerry pounded his pillow as he thought about old Tom and his early days in the mine. Working at Swift was a whole lot better than that! Jerry thought about the owner of Swift Auto Parts, Randy. He was younger than Jerry, but a really hard worker. Jerry admired him for starting his own business. Jerry sighed. Thinking about the old days in the mine had taken his mind off the problem of the solenoids. What should he do?

Problem Solving

Abruptly, Jerry sat up in bed. That's right, he thought to himself, I'm thinking about the *problem* of the solenoids. Jerry remembered from CUES that he could apply problem solving techniques to a situation like this one. As he came to this realisation, Jerry knew that he was already at Step One in problem solving: **Think vs. React**.

Jerry realised he had been reacting to the problem all day. He had been troubled and upset and thoughts had been going around and around in his mind. Well, now he would stop reacting and start thinking. The next step in the process was to **Define the problem**. Jerry snorted to himself. Someone was stealing the solenoids, that was clear enough! Nonetheless, he decided to slow down and go through the problem solving process. He remembered that Lisa, his instructor at CUES, had always said that the process was important so that you didn't miss anything. Jerry decided to get out of bed since he couldn't sleep anyway, and write down his thoughts.

To define the problem, Jerry wrote down the following questions.

Why do I think there is a problem?

Where is it happening?

How is it happening?

Problem Solving Involves:
Thinking vs. Reacting
Defining the Problem
Prioritizing the Problem
Generating Possible Solutions
Selecting the Best Solution

When is it happening?

With whom is it happening?

Next to the questions, he tried to answer them.

Why do I think there is a problem?	We had 6 solenoids last week. The computer says we sold two. Today we had two left. Two are missing.
Where is it happening?	Stock room.
How is it happening?	Don't know.
When is it happening?	Don't know.
With whom is it happening?	Don't know, but it's probably someone who works for Swift. If someone had broken in, we would have known.

Jerry looked at his questions and answers. He felt a little better now that he had written down the problem. He decided to keep going.

Once the problem was defined, then you should **Decide on its Priority**. It could be low priority, high priority or somewhere in the middle. If the problem was high priority, then you would want to begin looking for a solution right away. If it wasn't so important, you might decide to wait or ignore it. Jerry decided that the missing solenoids were a high priority problem.

Do you agree? Why or why not?

Jerry moved on to the next step: **Generating Possible Solutions**. Jerry looked at the words on the paper, but he didn't have any ideas. Catch the guy, of course, he muttered to himself. At this point in the problem solving process you were supposed to share ideas with others to come up with ways and ideas for solving the problem. However, Jerry realised that he couldn't talk to his co-workers about the solenoids because he didn't know who was stealing the parts. Getting this far in the process helped Jerry realise that the big problem – discovering who was stealing the parts and dealing with him – wasn't his problem. Jerry's problem was what to do with the

information that he had. Basically, Jerry knew he had two choices: tell his boss or keep his mouth shut.

What do you think that Jerry should do?

The final step in problem solving was to **Select the Best Solution**. Jerry looked at his two choices.

1. What would happen if he didn't say anything to Randy? He thought carefully. More parts might go missing, and Randy was bound to notice at some point. Besides, Jerry thought, I like Randy and I don't like that someone is ripping him off.
2. What would happen if he told Randy? The stolen parts and the dishonest employee were really Randy's problem. Jerry respected his boss and liked working at Swift Auto Parts. He didn't like the idea of working with someone who was stealing. If he told Randy then he could deal with the problem right away.

Jerry liked his co-workers and didn't want to get anyone in trouble. Nonetheless, he knew that he would have to share his discovery with his boss tomorrow.

The next day, Jerry waited until his break to tell Randy about the missing solenoids. Randy frowned as Jerry told the story, but Jerry knew that Randy wasn't angry with him.

Finally, Randy said, "Thanks Jerry. I really appreciate your telling me this."

Activity

You work for Swift Auto Parts. You have noticed that when the boss leaves early on Saturday afternoon, your co-worker, Pete, borrows some tools from work. On Monday morning he always gets there early to return them. What do you do? Use the steps to Think and Solve Problems below to help you come up with a solution.



Steps to Think and Solve Problems

While at CUES, Jerry and the other students had learned the steps to Think and Solve Problems. Jerry has just gone through them to help him deal with his problem at work.

1. **Think vs. React** – Often when something is bothering us, we don't stop to think, we just react! The first and most important step is to stop reacting and start thinking. Step back from the problem and try to look at it objectively. This will help you to better understand what is going on. Understanding is the beginning of the solution.

State the problem:

2. **Define the Problem** – Ask the following questions when you are attempting to define the problem. It doesn't matter if you don't know all of the answers. What matters is thinking through the problem. If it helps you, write down your questions and answers.

- Why do I think there is a problem? _____
- Where is it happening? _____
- How is it happening? _____
- When is it happening? _____
- With whom is it happening? _____

3. **Prioritize the Problem** – Is the problem low priority, high priority or somewhere in the middle? After you have thought through the problem, it is easier to decide how important it is. You may decide that you can leave it until later or that it has to be dealt with right away.

4. **Generate Possible Solutions** – This is like brainstorming. Try and get feedback from other workers about the problem. How do they see it? Why do they think there is a problem? What solutions do they offer? Go through this process in your own mind as well. If it helps you, write down your questions and answers.

5. **Select the Best Approach and Try it Out** – Choose the solution you think is best and try it out. Usually this is the right one, but if it isn't, try another.

Scenario Two – Erica thinks about a problem



“Oh no, not again!” Erica watched as the tail lights of her bus disappeared down the street. It was Thursday night and Erica had missed her bus for the third Thursday in a row. Thursdays at the bakery were always hectic. Dough Dude got its main shipment of baking supplies on Thursday afternoon and that kept Sam, Edna and Erica very busy. Furthermore, Sam usually left at around four o’clock on Thursdays, which left Edna and Erica alone until the bakery closed at six. Often, they were busy on cash until the doors closed. Edna did not like to turn away any last minute customers. If Erica got out by 6:15, she could catch her bus, but if she didn’t, she missed it – like tonight. Then she had to wait 20 minutes for the next one, which made her late for her transfer.

Erica sighed and went back into the bakery.

“Missed it again, have you?” asked Edna as she put on her coat. “It’s too bad you can’t make alternative arrangements.” Edna held open the door for Erica and then carefully locked it. “See you tomorrow, dear.”

Easy for her, Erica muttered to herself as she watched Edna climb into her car and head in the opposite direction. *Alternative arrangements!* What did that mean anyway? Erica thought about it as she waited at the bus stop. *Alternative* meant something different and *arrangements* meant all kinds of things! However in this case, Erica was pretty sure it just meant plans.

Make different plans, I guess, thought Erica. But I haven’t made any plans! I just want to get home!

Lately, Erica had begun to notice that when she was feeling sorry for herself (like now!) or wanting to take the easy way out, then another voice also spoke to her. She always imagined the owner of this voice looked like Lisa from CUES. It was speaking to her now.

“Maybe that’s the problem,” said the other voice, “You don’t make plans! Alternative arrangements means do something different!”

All right, Erica thought angrily, I will! I might as well do something while I'm waiting for the stupid bus! I'll think of a solution to this problem! So Erica stopped reacting and started thinking.

Define the problem, she told herself.

Thursday nights I am not able to leave the bakery at 6 pm as I usually do. I have to stay and help close. So usually, I miss my bus. Then I miss my next bus and don't get home until after 7:30, so my mom has already put the baby to bed and I'm too tired for anything!

Why do I think there is a problem? 7:30 is too late for me to get home and have time with my family.

Where is it happening? Well that doesn't really matter, thought Erica.

How is it happening? I miss one bus and then the next!

When is it happening? After 6:15 because there's no way I can catch my bus then!

With whom is it happening? Edna! Why can't she close by herself? But here Erica stopped herself. That wasn't fair. Sam and Edna had asked her about Thursday evenings when she was first hired. She was even allowed to come in a half hour later Friday mornings to make up for it. So if it wasn't happening with Edna, I guess it's just happening with me, thought Erica. It's my problem.

Is the problem low priority or high priority? Erica thought about this as she got onto the late bus. When she had practised thinking and solving problems at CUES, the problems were usually at work and affected co-workers. It was easy to tell whether it was high or low priority. She knew that this problem was not a problem at all for the others at Dough Dude, so did that make it a low priority?

Not for me, Erica muttered. The woman who sat across from Erica on the bus looked at her and then quickly away. Erica decided not to do any more muttering out loud.

So missing my bus is a high priority for me even if it doesn't matter to Edna and Sam.

What solutions are there, Erica wondered as she waited for her next bus. Lisa had encouraged them to write down all kinds of solutions, even if they weren't practical. You never know when one of them will give you a really good idea, she used to say. Thinking outside the box! That's what Lisa called it.

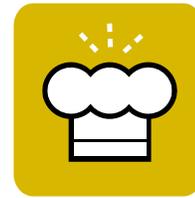
Let's see...helicopter, private jet...Erica grinned to herself as she caught the next bus. The bus driver smiled at her too.

Erica sat down and continued to dream. Chauffeur driven limousine...my own car...She looked out the window as another bus turned in front of hers. Then she saw a taxi drive by. Buses and taxis. They were going in the same direction as she was. Hmmm.

When Erica was finally dropped at her stop (7:40 pm), she asked the driver about bus schedules. He said that she could find them online. Seeing the other bus had given her an idea. Maybe there was a stop close by where she could catch another bus. She also decided to call a cab company and ask about fares. Erica almost never took a taxi because the bus was so much cheaper. But now that she was working, perhaps she could afford it every once in a while! Erica also decided to talk over her problem with her mother and her partner Mike. She knew that when it came to problem solving, it was a good idea to include the opinions of others.

Activity

You work for Dough Dude Bakery. Your boss has asked you to work Friday nights. You haven't given her an answer yet because you have to work out a few things. Here are some of the issues you have to consider:



- Your mother, who babysits for you, always plays bingo with her friends on Friday nights.
- Your partner works irregular shifts.
- Your best friend from high school has just moved into your apartment block and was looking forward to spending some Friday evenings with you.

Use the steps to Think and Solve Problems to help you come up with a solution.

Using Skills to Think and Solve Problems

1. In the scenarios above, Jerry and Erica had very different kinds of problems to solve. Nonetheless, they were able to use the same steps to solve them. As a review, list the five steps of problem solving below.

2. When solving a problem, it is a good idea to get different points of _____ to help you find a solution.

Reflection

Before you read through these scenarios, you rated your employability skills to Think and Solve Problems. Now rate them again using the scale below.

Rate yourself on your think and solve problems skills.

1 = This skill is very difficult for me.

2 = I understand this skill better but need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Skills to Think and Solve Problems	1	2	3
Do you understand the difference between reacting to a problem and thinking about it?			
Can you define a problem and see it from different angles?			
When solving problems, can you ask for and accept input from others?			
Are you able to try out different solutions?			
Are you able to figure out which is the best solution?			

- 1. After reading through this module, do you have a better understanding of the importance of problem solving for work? In your own words, explain why it is important to Think and Solve problems when you are working.**

- 2. Do you think that your own problem solving skills have improved? Give an example.**

This module has used one method for thinking and solving problems. There are lots more! Check out the websites below for some different ideas.

If you have not yet mastered this skill and need more practice, ask your instructor for more materials for you to practise with. Or, search the internet for sites on improving your skills to Think and Solve Problems. Here are some to get you started.

www.gdrc.org/decision/problem-solve.html

www.qualitydigest.com/sept02/articles/02_article.shtml

www.studygs.net/problem/index.htm

Think and Solve Problems – conclusion

If you want to practise and improve your skills to think and solve problems you can:

- Ask your instructor for more materials
- Visit the websites noted in this lesson
- Practise your skills to think and solve problems everywhere! We don't only face problems at work. The next time you have a problem at home or at school, give this method a try.

Remember that employability skills are transferrable from the work place to the other areas of your life like home and community. Give two examples of how the ability to think and solve problems is important in other parts of your life.

Remember: Employability skills are the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work – whether you work on your own or as part of a team.

These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities.

Module Three Employability Skills: Demonstrate Positive Attitudes and Behaviours

When we think about skills for the job, it is easy to understand why good communication or problem solving skills are so important. They help us to understand one another and solve the day to day problems that arise at work. At first, it might not be as easy to see why **Demonstrating Positive Attitudes and Behaviours** is an important employability skill. As a matter of fact, the words, “positive attitude” have become a **cliché**, a term that is over-used.

When you hear the words, “positive attitude”, what comes to mind? Jot down a few things or images that you think about.

Before You Read

A. Reflect on your positive attitudes and behaviours.

What do you do when your friend or partner gets angry with you and you don't know why?

- a) I think I must have done something wrong to make them angry.
- b) I call him or her a name and leave.
- c) I think that the person is probably having a bad day or is in a bad mood.

A friend asks you to help her move and you agree. When you get to her apartment, the boxes are only half packed. What do you do?

- a) Dig in and start working because you can see she is overwhelmed.
- b) Wait until she gives you something to do.
- c) Tell her you'll be back when she is more organized.

B. Rate your skills

Rate yourself on your positive attitudes and behaviours

1 = I need to learn this.

2 = I need to do this more often.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Positive Attitudes and Behaviours	1	2	3
Do you feel self-confident and good about yourself?			
Do you take good care of yourself, particularly your health and hygiene?			
Do you deal with people and situations with honesty and integrity?			
Do you recognize your own and other people's good efforts?			
Do you show interest, initiative and effort?			

Scenarios

The scenarios that follow are about Jerry and Keith. As you know, Jerry is working at Swift Auto Parts, and Keith is working for Straight Path Construction. Let's see how well these former CUES students manage when it comes to positive attitudes and behaviours.

Scenario One – Keith learns about positive attitudes and behaviours on the job



Keith could hear the jackhammer. It sounded dangerously close to his head. But was it a jackhammer? Now it sounded like a fire alarm. That's strange, thought Keith, I could have sworn...

With difficulty, Keith opened his eyes. Not a jackhammer, no fire, just an alarm clock. Keith reached an arm out of the warm blankets and slapped the snooze. Immediately, he was dreaming again.

Keith hit the snooze twice more before dragging himself out of bed. He squinted at the clock. In just ten minutes Mario would be by in his truck to pick him up! Keith grabbed some clothes from a pile on the floor and started pulling them on as he headed for the washroom. In the kitchen he grabbed a glass of milk and a handful of chocolate chip cookies.

Beep, beep! All right, all right, Keith muttered as he locked the door behind him. He climbed into Mario's truck and slammed the door.

"Hey, did I get you out of bed or something?" Mario asked.

Keith grunted. Mario put the truck into gear and then glanced over at Keith.

"You better go in and get your lunch," he said.

"Don't have one," said Keith, "I'll get something off the coffee truck."

Keith stared at Mario resentfully. How could anyone be so cheerful at seven in the morning? Meanwhile, Mario was opening his window to let in the crisp morning air. He glanced over at Keith again.

"How long have you been working in construction?" he asked Keith.

"Almost three months now," said Keith. Even as he said it, his stomach gave a lurch. Keith didn't usually last past the three month trial period. He was hoping it would be different this time.

"I've been working in construction for ten years," said Mario. "I used to work with this old guy, his name was Tony. It was like having a mother at work." Mario laughed and shook his head. "Tony used to check and see that I had a clean shirt on every morning. If he figured my lunch wasn't big enough, he'd give me half of his sandwich. He could be a pain sometimes, but I learned a lot from Tony."

Keith didn't say anything. Casually, he rolled up the sleeves of his shirt that showed yesterday's dirt.

"Yeah, I dug drainage ditches alongside Tony for a couple of years. He always had on clean work clothes and a really white t-shirt underneath. At lunch he would arrange all of his food on a huge napkin.

"One day he was giving me a hard time because my shirt and pants were dirty from the day before. I guess I was in a bad mood that day and I just lost it. So I said to him, 'What's it to you what I wear and what I eat? I don't have a wife who washes all my clothes and packs my lunch!'"

Mario grimaced as they came to a red light. He looked over at Keith and said, "I still feel embarrassed when I remember that time. There were a bunch of us sitting around and no one looked at Tony or said anything, but you could feel them all stop and listen. And then Tony said something to me that I'll never forget. He said, 'If you don't respect yourself, you won't get respect from others. Respecting yourself begins with taking care of yourself: eat well, sleep well,

and keep yourself clean. No one's going to look down on you if you do those things.' He finished his sandwich, packed up his lunch pail and went back to work."

Keith looked at him, "That doesn't sound too embarrassing."

"You weren't there," said Mario, "I suddenly noticed that just about everyone on the crew except me was wearing clean clothes. I realised that they had all shaved and probably showered. I wondered if at some time or another they had all heard this speech from Tony. But that wasn't the embarrassing part. After Tony had got up and left, I was called some names that I'd never even heard of. 'What's wrong with you guys?' I demanded. My foreman told me that Tony's wife had died of cancer the previous year. He'd been packing his own lunches and washing his own clothes ever since."

Mario swung his truck around the corner and onto the construction site. He put it in park and laughed suddenly. "I've got a wife now – and I pack her lunch!"

That day, Keith worked most of the time by himself. He didn't mind because he had a lot to think about. He thought about the story that Mario told, and he wondered why Mario had told it.

Why do you think?

He also found himself thinking about CUES and their group discussions about positive attitudes and behaviours. This had been a very difficult employability skill for Keith. He had a hard time with the whole idea of self-confidence and feeling good about himself. He tended to see what was wrong before he saw what was right. And he didn't think much of effort unless there was something to show for it.

One day at CUES, as they were discussing positive attitudes and behaviours, their instructor Lisa had said that often, if we don't get lots of affirmation and praise for our efforts as children, it's difficult for us to experience those things as adults. Lisa moved on to some other topics, but Keith stayed with that one. He thought about his parents. They were good to him, he thought. He hadn't been badly treated or anything. But somehow, Keith couldn't remember very much positive feedback coming his way. That makes sense, he thought. This is something I'm going to have to learn on my own.

Now Keith felt he had come a long way. He was managing his anger better, and he had learned not to shoot off at the mouth just because someone annoyed him. Guys like Mario, who had been in construction for a long time, seemed to like him. Keith realised that, even though he was only working as a labourer, his job was important to the crew, and he took pride in what he did. As Keith thought about these things he began to feel a bit better. Yes, it was important to acknowledge his own and others' good efforts.

Keith thought some more about Mario. He didn't want to admit it at first, but Keith knew why Mario had told the story about Tony. Keith knew that Mario was right.

That evening, Keith shopped for some groceries for his lunches. He threw all of his work clothes into the laundry. He realised that getting up in the morning was still hard for him, so he had a shower and shaved the night before. Finally, Keith watched one less TV show and got to bed a little earlier.

The next morning, Keith felt good. His clean laundry and lunch were ready for him and he had got up early enough to have some toast and milk. When he heard the Beep, beep! of Mario's truck, he was ready to go.

Questions for Reflection

Go back to the list of positive attitudes and behaviours at the beginning of this chapter. Which attitudes and behaviours do you think that Keith has learned more about?

What was the important message that Tony gave Mario in his story? Do you agree with Tony? Explain why or why not.

Positive Attitudes and Behaviours at Work

Just what are positive attitudes and behaviours at work? First of all, they are considered **Personal Management Skills**. According to the Conference Board of Canada, these are the skills, attitudes and behaviours that encourage personal growth.



We might think that personal growth does not have much to do with work. But when we remember that employability skills are also about *progressing* in the world of work, we realise that in order to progress, we have to change and grow. Positive attitudes and behaviours can help when you're on the job and beyond the workplace.

Let's take a closer look at how these attitudes and behaviours relate to work.

Demonstrating positive attitudes and behaviours means to:

- *Feel self-confident and good about yourself*
- *Take good care of yourself*
- *Deal with people and situations with honesty and integrity*
- *Recognize your own and other people's good efforts*
- *Show interest, initiative and effort*

Feel self-confident and good about yourself. Today we hear a lot about self-confidence. Basically, it is about believing in yourself. If you are self-confident it means that you think and believe you can do the things that are required of you both in and out of the workplace. Being self-confident is not the same as being conceited. People who are conceited tend to talk a lot about themselves and their abilities. Often, conceited people actually lack self-confidence. Self-confident people don't usually talk a lot about what they do, they just do it. At work, this means that you know that you can do your job and do it well. It also means that when you are trained in new skills, you have confidence in your ability to learn and adapt.

Take good care of yourself. When you feel good about yourself, then you will want to take care of yourself too. This includes taking care of your health, as well as good grooming and hygiene. Good self-care says to those around you that you value yourself and they should value you too. Who would you rather have as a co-worker: someone with greasy hair, body odour and a bad cough, or someone who is clean and takes care of their health?

Deal with people and situations with honesty and integrity. Think about the following saying: "The way you treat others says more about you than it does about them." Do you agree with this statement? A person of integrity has strong moral principles. It means that he or she will always try to do the right thing regardless of the situation or who else is involved. For example, if you have a co-worker named Bob who always lies, do you lie to him? Not if you act with honesty and integrity. You will tell the truth and do the right thing because you have strong principles; how Bob acts is his own problem.

Recognize your own and other people's good efforts. Have you ever heard the expression, "It's the thought that counts?" Sometimes you will try your best in a situation, but it still doesn't work out the way you had hoped. If this happens, don't beat yourself up. Know that you made the right effort, but results just weren't there. This happens to other people too. Be sure to acknowledge good effort and not just good results.

Show interest, initiative and effort. Some people say that their job is "just a paycheque". This means that they are working for money and not much else. Of course, a paycheque is an important reason to go to work every day. However, if you are working full-time, this means that you are spending eight hours a day at a job for only one reason. Showing interest, initiative and effort at work means that you are looking for aspects of your job that stimulate and energize you.

Sometimes you have to show the interest, initiative and effort before you feel like it. Like exercise, sometimes the hardest thing is getting started.

Activities

Think about how you would respond to the following two situations. Write down some ideas and then discuss them with your group or instructor.



1. You and a co-worker Dave have a job where you are working close to one another. It's obvious that Dave doesn't shower as often as he should. You like Dave, but you don't like working with him because he really smells. What will you do?

2. You're working with someone who is brand new on the job. You ask him to finish digging around the gas lines while you begin at the next section. When you come back, you see that even though he is working hard, he has only done about half the work you expected. You realise that one of the problems is that he has no gloves and he already has blisters forming on his hands. What do you say to him?

Part Two: Jerry Improves His Positive Attitudes and Behaviours on the Job



Honesty and Integrity

After Jerry had told his boss about the missing solenoids, he thought back to his days at CUES and the discussions they had around honesty and integrity. They had talked about how difficult it was sometimes to act with honesty and integrity. Sometimes it was too easy not to say anything. After all, hadn't Jerry thought about minding his own business about the missing solenoids? And other times, it was tempting to say too much!

Randy had asked Jerry if he thought he knew who had taken the solenoids. Basically, Randy was asking Jerry to tell him which of his two co-workers – Reg or Ron – was the more likely thief. Jerry had his own ideas. He didn't much like working with Reg, who always seemed to be more interested in Jerry's business than his own. If he were to guess who was dishonest, he would put his money on Reg. But in fact, Jerry had no proof. If Jerry told Randy he thought that it was Reg who had stolen the solenoids, Reg might lose his job. Jerry realised that he didn't like or trust Reg. He also knew that this didn't make Reg a thief.

So although Jerry had been tempted to tell Randy his opinion, he had kept it to himself. "Sorry, Randy," he had said, "I have no idea."

A few days after his talk with Randy, Reg and Jerry were working together. The two men didn't say much to one another and there was tension in the air. "He knows I know," thought Jerry. He looked up and saw that Reg was watching him. That's it! Jerry thought, I'm going to say something to him. But Jerry got no further because suddenly the two of them heard loud and angry voices coming from Randy's office. The office door slammed and Ron burst into the sales area. He thrust through the displays and out the front door. They heard him peeling away in his car. Randy came out a few minutes later.

"That was difficult," he said. "But thanks to both of you I caught him red-handed. I've got to call at the police station and run a few errands. Are you two going to be okay while I'm out?"

Both Jerry and Reg glanced at one another and nodded. The door closed behind Randy. There were no customers in Swift Auto Parts, and it was very, very quiet. Jerry cleared his throat.

"Bit of a surprise, eh?" he said. Reg didn't answer. Jerry looked up from his work and was astonished to see how red Reg's face was.

"You all right?" he asked.

"Yeah," said Reg, "Look! I'm really sorry, but I thought it was you!"

“Me!” said Jerry. For a moment, he was speechless. Then he was angry. “Yeah? Well I thought it was you!”

They both stared at one another with angry expressions and then each started to laugh. When the door opened and a couple walked in, Reg was gasping and holding his stomach and Jerry was clutching the counter for support. It was all they could do to stop laughing and help the customers.

After the customers had left, one said to the other, “Who would have thought it was so much fun to work in a parts store?”

Interest, Initiative and Effort

Ron’s replacement, Mark, was due to start at Swift Auto Parts. He would work with Reg on Monday and with Jerry on Tuesday. On Wednesday morning, Reg and Jerry worked together. Randy asked them how Mark was working out on the job. Jerry shrugged. “Seems to be getting the hang of things,” he said. Reg told Randy that he had shown Mark around the parts room. He had shown him how to look up parts and how to find them.

Mark eased into life at Swift Auto Parts. He caught on quickly and both men liked him. Randy was relieved. It had been very stressful having a thief on staff. He really felt like he could use a vacation. He discussed it with his three workers and worked out a schedule for the week he was away.

“I hope you don’t mind closing all week, Reg,” he said. Reg didn’t mind. He welcomed the extra hours. He knew that closing was a big responsibility, and he felt proud to be given the job.

Jerry had mixed feelings. On the one hand, the old Jerry, the one who did his work and kept his head down, was happy. But the new Jerry, the one who was getting involved and taking an interest, felt a little hurt. He decided to speak to Randy.

“I was wondering about the shifts while you’re away, Randy,” he said.

“Hmmm?” asked Randy. He was staring at his computer screen. It showed a beautiful green fairway with a distant green. Jerry knew that Randy was going to a golf resort for his vacation.

“The shifts,” Jerry repeated. “You’ve given Reg all of the busy shifts and the responsibility of closing and taking the money to the bank. I was just wondering if you uh, didn’t trust me or something.”

Randy stared at him in surprise. “Not at all, Jerry! I trust you absolutely. You are really good at what you do and great with customers.”

“Well then...”

“Well,” said Randy, “You haven’t shown much interest in learning about the cashing out or closing.”

Jerry looked puzzled so Randy continued.

“Look Jerry, this is a small business and I have a lot on my mind. I don’t have big training and policy manuals to tell you how to do the job. Sometimes, you have to show the interest and effort on your own. Usually when 6 o’clock rolls around you finish up what you’re doing and leave.

“I thought that was what I was supposed to do,” said Jerry.

“Think about when Mark first arrived. You didn’t tell him much unless he asked you. On the other hand, Reg showed him all kinds of things. That’s taking initiative,” said Randy.

“But I take initiative!” argued Jerry. “I do all kinds of things around here without being asked.

“Yes you do,” Randy agreed, “And you got a raise after you had been here for three months because you are a great employee. But if I were to suggest one area for you to improve in, it would be showing interest, initiative and effort around learning and doing new things. The fact is, the parts business is always changing. Now you’re great helping people with older cars. You know more about vintage cars and parts than I ever will. But I also notice that you aren’t as interested in the newer parts.”

“I just don’t know as much about them,” Jerry admitted.

“I know that. But that’s why we carry trade magazines and parts guides. I take a couple home every weekend to keep up on the new parts trends. I’d be lost otherwise. You’re welcome to do the same.”

“All right,” said Jerry.

That evening at 6 o’clock Mark finished his work and left, but Jerry stayed behind. “I may as well learn a little more about closing,” he said to Randy. “After all, what if Reg gets sick or something? I guess we’d better have some back up.”

“That’s an excellent idea, Jerry,” said Randy.



Tools for Application

1. What are the positive attitudes and behaviours that Jerry already has?

2. Which positive attitudes and behaviours does Jerry need to work on?

3. Do you think that Jerry is willing to work on these new skills? Why or why not?

Reflection

Before you read through these scenarios, you rated your employability skills that relate to positive attitudes and behaviours. Now rate them again using the scale below.

Rate yourself on your positive attitudes and behaviours.

1 = This skill is very difficult for me.

2 = I understand this skill better but need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Positive Attitudes and Behaviours	1	2	3
Do you feel self-confident and good about yourself?			
Do you take good care of yourself, particularly your health and hygiene?			
Do you deal with people and situations with honesty and integrity?			
Do you recognize your own and other people's good efforts?			
Do you show interest, initiative and effort?			

Would you like to develop your positive attitudes and behaviours? Check out the websites below:

http://www.successconsciousness.com/positive_attitude.htm

<http://www.pickthebrain.com/blog/10-ways-to-instantly-build-self-confidence/>

Positive Attitudes and Behaviours – Conclusion

If you want to improve your positive attitudes and behaviours you can:

- Ask for more information from your instructor
- Research the internet for articles and information
- Take out a book from the library
- Talk to someone you know who has a positive attitude – ask how they do it!

Remember that employability skills are transferrable from the work place to the other areas of your life like home and community. Give two examples of how positive attitudes and behaviours are important in other parts of your life.

Be prepared to discuss all of your answers, ideas and reflections with your group or instructor. Insights into employability skills are best when shared!

Remember: Employability skills are the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work – whether you work on your own or as part of a team.

These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities.

Module Four Employability Skills: Be Responsible

Employers are looking for **responsible** employees. Responsible employees can be relied on to work safely, manage their time and resources well and be dependable in and outside of work.

Before you read:

A. Reflect on your ability to be responsible

1. What would you do if you had to get up very early for a job interview and a friend you hadn't seen for a long time asked you out the night before?

2. Are you able to stick to a budget to pay rent or save for something you need?

3. If something goes wrong between you and your partner or friends, are you able to take your share of the responsibility?

4. Do you volunteer or contribute in some way to your community?

B. Rate your skills

Rate yourself on your ability to be responsible.

1 = I need to learn this.

2 = I need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Skills for Being Responsible	1	2	3
Set goals and priorities balancing work and personal life			
Plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals			
Be accountable for your actions and the actions of your group			
Be socially responsible and contribute to your community			
Act in accordance with personal and group safety practices			

Scenarios

The scenarios that follow are about Erica and Keith. Learn more about being responsible at work as you read about some of the choices they each have to make.



Scenario One

The phone at Dough Dude Bakery began to ring as Erica finished with her customer. Edna came from the back of the bakery and answered it.

“Dough Dude Bakery, good morning!” she said. “Who? Oh yes, just a minute.” Edna handed the phone to Erica. “It’s for you.”

Erica had never had anyone call her at work before. Her heart was

pounding. Was something wrong at home?

“Hello?” she squeaked.

“Erica is that you? It’s Aunt Helen.”

“Aunt Helen!” cried Erica. “How did you get my number?”

“I called your mother. Erica, I’m actually going to be in town this Saturday. A dear friend’s mother has died, so I’m going with her to the funeral. She wants to do the trip in one day, so I’ll only have a few hours. Is there any way we can meet?”

Saturday! thought Erica. “I’ll have to call you back, Aunt Helen. I’ll call you this evening.”

After Erica had hung up, she apologised to Edna for the personal call.

“That’s all right. As long as it doesn’t happen very often,” said Edna.

How do you think that employers feel about personal calls at work? Why?

What would you do if your friend or family member called you at work?

Erica was very busy that morning, and she didn’t really have time to think about her aunt until her break.

No getting around it, she thought, Saturday is a problem. Erica was supposed to work every Saturday. However she had been very sick last Saturday and had called Edna to say she could not work. How could she ask for this Saturday off as well? On the other hand, how could she miss seeing her Aunt Helen? She was Erica’s favourite Aunt. Since Erica had moved to the city she had not seen her.

Erica decided to call her aunt that night and ask for a few more details.

What information should Erica get from her aunt to help with this problem?

In this situation, Erica is struggling to **balance work and her personal life**. Both are important, and if we want to live healthy balanced lives, we cannot always ignore one in favour of the other.

Have you heard of the term, workaholic? Do you think a workaholic lives a balanced life? Why or why not?

Do you know anyone who is always taking time off work? Is it always acceptable to put our personal lives before work? Why or why not?

“Hello Aunt Helen? I have to work on Saturday, but I am hoping that I can see you as well. Can you give me some more information about when you will be here?”

Erica found out that her aunt would be attending the funeral at 11 am. Aunt Helen thought that she would be free by around 12:30 or one o’clock. She knew that her friend wanted to be back on the road by 4 pm.

“Thanks, Aunt Helen,” said Erica. “I think I can work something out so that I can work and see you too.”

The next day Erica went into work and spoke to Edna. She told her about her Aunt Helen and how she had not seen her in two years. Erica asked if she could take her lunch at one o’clock and she also asked if she could have an extra half hour at lunch and skip her two 15 minute breaks. In this way, Erica was trying **to manage her time to achieve an important goal**: spending time with her aunt.

Edna agreed to this plan, and after work Erica called her aunt to make the arrangements.



Tools for Application

In this scenario, Erica is using two skills for being responsible. What are they?

Erica is balancing work and personal life and managing her time to achieve an important goal. These are skills that we use all of the time. For example, you may not yet be employed, but you are upgrading your skills so that you can get a job. How do you manage your study time and your time at home? Read the article below and then answer the questions that follow.

Work/Life Balance Tips

While you can't control all of the factors that affect your work/life balance, there are some things you can control. Acting on these tips will help you achieve better work/life balance, and make you more productive at work!

Ask your employer for support

Many organizations have policies in place to help employees achieve better work/life balance. Most businesses recognize that workers who are healthier and more balanced are better for the organization's productivity and long-term success – and that work/life imbalance hurts business.

In fact, according to some estimates, burnout costs Canadian business an estimated \$12 billion every year in health claims, lost productivity and absenteeism.

There are a number of ways you can improve your work/life balance.

At Work

- **Take your scheduled breaks.** Your productivity and effectiveness will increase if you take your breaks and lunch. Overall, you will get more accomplished.
- **At the end of each day, set your priorities for the following day.** Be realistic about what you can achieve in the time you have available.

- **Only respond to email once or twice a day.** Then, shut off your email program to avoid being distracted as messages come in.
- **Make a distinction between work and the rest of your life.** Protect your private time by turning off electronic communications. Don't be available 24/7.
- **Address concerns about deadlines early.** If you see that a deadline is unrealistic, communicate your concern to your employer - don't wait until the deadline passes.
- **Take all of your allotted vacation time.** Taking vacation allows you to come back to work refreshed and more productive.

At Home

- **Create a buffer between work and home.** After work, take a brief walk, do a crossword puzzle, or listen to some music before beginning the evening's routine.
- **Decide what chores can be shared or let go.** Determine which household chores are critical and which can be done by someone else. Let the rest go.
- **Exercise.** Even if it's only for 15 minutes at a time, you'll feel more energized and refreshed.
- **Create and implement a household budget.** Start by setting aside some money from each pay cheque for the future.
- **Make healthy food choices.** Healthy eating will give you and your family more energy.
- **Pursue a hobby.** Either with friends or family or for some quality time on your own.

In Your Community

- **Make choices.** Social, community and volunteer obligations pull us in many directions. Choose the ones that are most fulfilling and learn to say 'no' to the rest.
- **Manage expectations.** Be clear at the outset about how much time or support you can contribute to community organizations or your children's school events.

Adapted from the Canadian Mental Health Association

http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=2-1841-1843-1895

1. Why do you think that taking your breaks makes you more productive at work?

2. How do you think that exercise and healthy food choices make you a better employee?

3. Erica is also trying to manage her time. In the story, she would like to take all of Saturday off to visit with her aunt but she doesn't. Why not?

How we manage our time often determines:

- Whether or not we are on time for appointments
- Whether we get to school or work on time
- If we have time to do chores or house work
- If we have time to spend with our family and friends
- If we can take time just for ourselves

Here are some tips to make the most of the 24 hours you have in a day.

1. Set up a plan. Plan your time each week and prioritize your most important tasks. Include things you want to accomplish, but not necessarily by a set time. Make a "to-do" list, and check things off as you go along. Focus mostly on the things that are important to you.

2. Control your stress. No matter what kind of pressure mounts on you, try to keep your cool. Stressing out can lead to an early breakdown, which is definitely counter-productive when you

have a list of things to do. It's easier to take a 10-minute break and cool off than work all week with built up stress.

3. **Avoid distractions.** When working under a timeline, schedule your important tasks to get them done. Avoid getting side-tracked into other activities.
4. **Don't delay.** When you have your list, get right on it. Start as early as you can, and you'll feel better when you can get your list knocked off earlier in the day. Letting things sit for a while, just leads to built up stress and procrastination.
5. **Focus on one thing at a time.** Forget trying to multi-task! You will lose concentration, and it will take you longer to accomplish what you set out to do.
6. **Just say "no."** If you have someone who constantly needs something, and you sincerely don't have the time to help out, just say "no." You're only one person, and you can't save the world by yourself!
7. **Stop wasting time on the phone.** Keep your conversations short, and to the point and you'll waste much less time.
8. **Limit computer time that is not work related.** Games, surfing and chatting are fun, but they all take up lots of time. Set limits on how much time you spend on the computer.
9. **Be realistic.** You can only do what you can do. Don't set out to accomplish the impossible. Do your best, but keep realistic expectations of yourself.

Adapted from: www.associatedcontent.com/

Do you think that you are good at managing your time? Give some concrete examples to support your answer.

Try This

Download and print out the time use chart at this link:

http://www.d.umn.edu/kmc/student/loon/acad/strat/time_use_chart.html

Fill it out for one week. At the end of the week, fill out the summary chart:

http://www.d.umn.edu/kmc/student/loon/acad/strat/summary_active.html

These charts will give you a clear idea of how you use your time.

If you think that you could do with some extra help with time management, check out:

<http://www.accd.edu/sac/history/keller/ACCDitg/SSTM.htm>

<http://www.lib.fit.edu/pubs/powerpoint/time.pdf>

Scenario Two



Keith was going to assist in building a support structure for an excavation. He was excited about it. It seemed to him that so far, construction work was just about shovelling earth in and out of holes. At last, he was going to be doing something interesting. The foreman had a sheet of specifications which he handed to Dale who would be in charge of building the support structure. Dale, Keith and Jason gathered around the paper, which is reproduced below.

Trench support structures

Excavation support structures are used to minimize the excavation area, to keep the sides of deep excavations stable, and to ensure that movements will not cause damage to neighbouring structures or to utilities in the surrounding ground.

Cross braces and trench jacks must be installed in a horizontal position and must be secured against dislodgment.

The minimum number of cross braces at each cross bracing location is determined by the trench depth as follows:

Depth at location	Number of braces
up to 2.4 m (8 ft)	2
2.4 m to 3.7 m (8 ft to 12 ft)	3
3.7 m to 4.6 m (12 ft to 15 ft)	4
4.6 m to 6 m (15 ft to 20 ft)	5

At each cross bracing location the cross braces must be less than 1.2 m (4 ft) apart, and the uppermost cross brace must be within 60 cm (2 ft) of ground level.

Plywood may be substituted for two inch thick shoring elements provided that

- (a) the plywood is not less than 19 mm (3/4 in) thick,
- (b) the trench is not over 2.7 m (9 ft) in depth,
- (c) uprights are installed at not over 60 cm (2 ft) centres,
- (d) cross braces do not bear directly on plywood, and
- (e) cross braces bearing on uprights or walers are located at all joints in plywood sheathing.

Adapted from: www2.worksafebc.com/

Wow, thought Keith when he had finished reading the specifications. And I didn't believe Lisa when she told me that construction labourers need to have good reading skills!

"Are we all clear on this?" asked Dale with a grin.

Keith and Jason exchanged looks.

"Not really," said Keith. "At least, I understand some of it, but it's pretty confusing."

"Okay," said Dale. "Do you understand the part about the plywood? We have a bunch of plywood behind the trailer. Go and see if there's anything we can use."

What should Keith and Jason be looking for when they choose the plywood?

Keith and Jason went to pick up the plywood and returned a short while later.

"Let's see what you've got," said Dale as he pulled out his measuring tape. He measured the two pieces Keith had carried over. Each was 21 mm. Then he measured Jason's. One was 19 mm exactly, but the other was only 16 mm. Dale raised an eyebrow. "Not good enough," he said. "The guidelines specify 19 mm. for a reason. How would you two like to be the ones who chose the thin plywood that caused a trench cave in?" Dale tossed the plywood back at them. "Pick up another piece the right size. Better get a couple more while you're at it."

Keith and Jason returned to the pile of plywood. Keith’s face was red and he was trying not to swear. Jason looked embarrassed.

“Thanks a lot,” he said to Keith.

Keith shrugged. “That’s okay. Maybe we should check over what we’ve got this time before taking it back.”

Keith doesn’t tell Dale that Jason chose the thin piece of plywood. Why not? What would you have done in the same situation?

Tools for Application

Sometimes being responsible on the job is difficult. When Keith did not tell Dale that Jason had chosen the thin plywood, he was **being accountable for his own actions and the action of his group**. In this case, he and Jason were working as a team or partnership. Keith knew that when you work as part of a team or group you are accountable to one another. Each worker takes responsibility for the team’s efforts, not just their own.



It is clear from the story that Dale was not interested in who had chosen the wrong plywood. He didn’t ask Keith and Jason, and he spoke to them as though they shared responsibility. Keith did not want to tell on Jason, and he didn’t have to.

Dale respected their team work, but at the same time wanted them to **act in accordance with personal and group safety practices**. This means that Dale insists that they follow the rules to ensure the safety of all the workers on the construction site. So even though Keith and Jason might not be working in the trench, they are still responsible to see that it is safe for others.

Before you work on the activities, check out the following web pages to read more about accountability and safety practices.

ezinearticles.com/?Why-You-Need-To-Be-Accountable&id=88024

What is the opposite of accountability?

What simple question can you ask yourself to get out of ‘victim mode’ and into accountability mode? What is the ‘next step’?

Take a safety mini challenge!

www.passporttosafety.com/MiniTest.php

Go to the WSIB website and answer the following questions.

www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/home_e

What does WSIB stand for?

Click on the link for workers and browse this section. How many languages is the workplace information available in? Why do you think this is so?

Sometimes you might have to make a tough choice when it comes to issues of safety. You might not want to tell your supervisor that a team member is not following certain rules and procedures. There are three mini scenarios below. Think about how you would respond and discuss your reflections with your group or your instructor or volunteer.

Activities



1. You and your partner are supposed to be building a trench support structure. Your partner, Garth, is hung over again and not concentrating very well. What do you do?
2. You and a partner are working on a deep fat fryer in a fast food restaurant. You must work together and really focus on what you're doing so that neither of you gets burnt. While your partner is on his break the line slows down so you go out the back to join him for a quick cigarette. However, when you get out there you see that he isn't smoking a cigarette, he's smoking a joint. What do you do?

3. You work on the night shift at the plant. There are no white hats (shift bosses) in sight and many of the workers are not bothering to wear their hard hats, although safety rules say they must. What do you do?

Scenario Three

This scenario doesn't include Erica, Keith or Jerry: it includes you!

Read the scenario and discuss the following questions in your group or with your instructor or volunteer.

1. You have been working at Acme Construction for just over a month. You find out that every year a group of Acme workers volunteers at a United Way fundraiser.

Will you volunteer? Why or why not?

Why do you think that employers value workers who are socially responsible and who contribute to their community?

2. Research your community

Find out about some of the volunteer opportunities there are in your community. Choose one where you might like to volunteer. Give a short (five minute) presentation to your group or your instructor about what you would like to do as a volunteer. Try and find some brochures or handouts about your volunteer position to give your group or instructor.

Reflection

Before you read through these scenarios, you rated your employability skills for being responsible. Now rate them again using the scale below. Rate yourself on your ability to be responsible.

1 = This skill is very difficult for me.

2 = I understand this skill better but need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Skills for Being Responsible	1	2	3
Set goals and priorities balancing work and personal life			
Plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals			
Be accountable for your actions and the actions of your group			
Be socially responsible and contribute to your community			
Act in accordance with personal and group safety practices			

Being Responsible - Conclusion

You can practise being responsible by:

- Setting goals to work towards in your studies
- Being on time for class and appointments
- Volunteering in your community

Be prepared to discuss all of your answers, ideas and reflections with your group or instructor. Insights into employability skills are best when shared!

Remember that employability skills are transferrable from the work place to the other areas of your life like home and community. Give two examples of how being responsible is important in other parts of your life.

Module Five Employability Skills:

Be Adaptable

Remember: Employability skills are the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work – whether you work on your own or as part of a team.

These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities.

You have probably heard the saying, “There are only two sure things in life: death and taxes”. Actually, there is a third sure thing in life and that is **Change**. There might not be anything you can do about the death and taxes, but how you respond to change can make a very big difference in life and work. To **be adaptable** is another way of saying that you cope well with change. Adapting to change is an important employability skill.

Before you read:

A. Reflect on your adaptability

1. What would you do if you preferred to work alone, but you had to work as part of a team?

2. Are you sometimes able to see new ways of doing things or do you prefer to stick with what you have always done?

3. How do you respond when someone asks you to change the way you do things?

4. If you make a mistake can you learn from it and move on?

B. Rate your skills

Rate yourself on your adaptability.

1 = I need to learn this.

2 = I need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Adaptability Skills	1	2	3
Work independently or as part of a team			
Carry out multiple tasks			
Be innovative and resourceful: identify and suggest different ways of achieving goals and getting the job done			
Learn from mistakes and accept feedback			
Be open and respond constructively to change			

Scenarios

These scenarios involve Keith and Jerry who both have to learn to adapt to their changing jobs.

Scenario One



Keith and Jason were sitting in the trailer. It was just after 7 am and they both had extra large Tim Horton's coffees in front of them. Jason had just finished telling a joke and they were both laughing. Keith would never have believed just a few short months ago that work could be so much fun.

They were due to start work at 7:30. The foreman, Louie, came into the trailer to assign them their work for the day. Keith hoped that they would be preparing more trench supports; he had really enjoyed that work.

“Jason, you go with Mario to pick up the extra pipes today.” Jason nodded and took a last swig of coffee.”

“Keith, we’re going to be pouring cement on that first section of sidewalk. You’ll need to spread the gravel first.”

Keith also nodded, but inside he was annoyed. Why did Jason get to go with Mario and he was stuck here raking gravel! Jason caught his eye and grinned. Keith made a face at him behind the foreman’s back.

“All right, guys. It’s just about 7:30,” said Louie. Keith and Jason grabbed their hard hats and left the trailer.

Keith raked hard because he was feeling angry and frustrated. He knew that when he was feeling angry, it was a better idea to take out his anger on gravel than on the foreman! Keith had learned quite a bit about managing his anger when he was at CUES. Lisa had suggested a few websites and had even linked him with an anger management program in the community. He knew that sometimes, he really didn’t have a good reason for being angry, he just was!

Like now, thought Keith as he attacked the gravel.

“Hey, Keith! What, you never used a rake before?” Louie frowned at Keith. “We want to get this sidewalk poured today, not next week.”

Louie took the rake from Keith and demonstrated how he wanted the gravel spread. When he had finished, the section he had done had an even, thin layer of gravel. Keith nodded his thanks as Louie handed him back the rake. He realised he had been so angry, he hadn’t been paying attention to what he was doing. Now the foreman thought he couldn’t even rake gravel! Keith tried to work carefully and quickly under Louie’s critical gaze. “That’s good!” he said to Keith and moved on.

Keith continued to rake in the way that Louie had shown him and thought some more. When he had first started at Straight Path Construction Keith liked the jobs most where he could work on his own. He had had a hard time working with others. Now, he thought, here I am, bent out of shape because I’m working on my own again! He shook his head at this. Keith was really growing to like his work. Every day was interesting: he might be with a different crew, in a different location or doing a different job. He realised it was silly to get angry just because he didn’t have the perfect situation every day of the week. He paused from his raking and took off his jacket. Today was the first sunny day in over a week. Poor Jason’s stuck in the truck and I’m out here enjoying the weather, thought Keith. He picked up the rake and realised he wasn’t angry any more.

Application

Keith has had to learn many skills on the job. In this scenario Keith shows that he has learned to



- Work independently or as part of a team
- Learn from mistakes and accept feedback
- Be open and respond constructively to change

In fact, Keith has learned to become more adaptable. One of the ways that Keith has learned to do this is to take each day one at a time. This means that when he is working today, he isn't wondering about what tomorrow is going to be like and he is not still re-hashing what went on yesterday. Keith has learned that he can take whatever job he is doing and find something positive in it.

1. What has Keith found to be positive about in the job he is doing now?

2. At 7:30 in the morning Keith envied Jason his job. Do you think that he would still wish to change places with Jason? Why or why not?

3. List three skills you will need if you are working alone.

4. List three different skills you will need if you are working as a team.

5. Which do you think helped Keith to get rid of his anger and bad humour: his attitude, the sunshine, or the raking? Or was it all three? Explain your choice.

6. Keith had to accept some critical feedback from Louie. What did he learn from that experience?

7. Why do you think that it is important to learn how to take critical feedback at work?

Keith has also learned to be open. What does it mean to be open? For Keith it has meant developing a ‘Wait and see’ attitude. Before Keith went to CUES he had spent a lot of time and energy pre-judging life. One of the reasons it had taken him so long to sign up at CUES was that he had already made up his mind that it was stupid and boring.

One morning about a week after Keith had been at CUES, Lisa had asked to speak with him.

“Keith, I want you to try something,” she had said. “Every time you think that something is a waste of time or not worth your effort, I want you to say to yourself, ‘Wait and see.’ That’s all. Don’t try and convince yourself of anything, just say, ‘Wait and see.’”

Keith was surprised at how well it worked. Sometimes, the words would just pop into his head – he wouldn’t even have to try! Now even when Keith got angry and frustrated, he could still suspend his judgement and wait and see. Even Keith’s friends had noticed that he wasn’t so negative and judgemental.

Keith had also picked up some useful anger management tips. Here is one of his favourite websites: www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102 that helps him to manage his anger in a positive way.

Click on the website above and read the anger management tips.

8. Even if you do not have a problem with anger, are these tips useful? Why or why not?

9. Take two tips from the website list and describe how they might help you even if you are good at keeping your temper in check.

Scenario Two



It was Friday afternoon at Swift Auto Parts. Jerry and Reg had been working together since lunch. Now Reg was going home, and Jerry would work until they closed at 9 pm.

Friday evenings generally weren't too busy at Swift Auto Parts, and Jerry found that the time passed slowly. He said so to Reg as Reg was putting on his coat to leave.

"Yeah, I know what you mean," said Reg. "Still, it's a good time to get other stuff done, isn't it? Well, see you tomorrow!"

This was true. Jerry had learned to work differently at Swift Auto Parts than he had at the mine. At the mine he had one job to do and that was it.

When you were finished your job, you were finished. You didn't look around for something else to do. At Swift Auto Parts, Randy didn't appreciate the staff standing around waiting for customers.

“There’s always something to do!” he would say.

This had taken some getting used to for Jerry. He realised that working at Swift Auto Parts was like yard work around the house; he always had two or three projects on the go. So Jerry began to look around and find things to do besides serving customers. Then he would no sooner get working on another job like receiving parts and entering them into the inventory when a customer would arrive! At first, he got a bit flustered and would lose his place on the invoice or in the computer, but after a while, he got used to it.

That Friday evening all of the inventory had been received and the work was pretty well up to date. Jerry was alone in the store so he did not want to work in the back room.

Why not?

He was looking around for some activity when he spied the software manual for their computer. The computer program at Swift could be used for both entering inventory and for sales. When they had to switch from inventory to sales, they would close one program and open the other. Jerry decided to read the manual to discover if there was an easier way of managing the programs.

It took him a while to find it, but eventually he did. Jerry read the instructions and then tried it out. The parts window collapsed and the sales window popped up. Easy when you know how, thought Jerry.

The next day he showed Reg and Randy how to change between the two activities. Randy was impressed.

“Great work, Jerry!” he said, “That’s really going to save us some time. Thanks a lot for figuring that out!”

Application

Since Jerry started work at Swift Auto Parts he has improved his skills to:

- Carry out multiple tasks
- Be innovative and resourceful



1. Why do you think that these are important workplace skills?

2. Do you think that Jerry used his time well that Friday evening? Why or why not?

3. What does it mean to be innovative and resourceful? How has Jerry used these skills in this scenario?

*Did you know that Canada has an innovation strategy? You can check it out at:
www.innovationstrategy.gc.ca/*

Discussion Paper

Read the article below on multi-tasking. Be prepared to discuss it with your instructor or colleagues.

Multi-tasking: An effective habit or a productivity killer?

A mom may be considered the ultimate multi-tasker: She can do the dishes, wash a load of laundry and begin fixing dinner while corralling the kids, answering the phone and trying to take a deep breath.

It's all in a day's work, right?

And so it is when you're sitting at a computer desk answering e-mails and your phone while looking for that book you haven't been able to find all week and thinking about the finishing of an assignment for the next day. But does all this multi-tasking negatively affect your productivity?

A lot depends on what's being juggled, said Joe Hartnett, associate professor of business at St. Charles Community College. The more complex the task, the more it will hurt your productivity.

Some studies have shown losses in productivity of as much as 20 percent to 40 percent while multi-tasking, Hartnett said. Having the ability to focus on one thing and give it a time limit before moving on to something else is much more effective.

In reality, Hartnett said, you can't literally do more than one thing at a time. You can intertwine things, though, such as doing one thing while waiting on another. Trying to give adequate time and energy to more than one project or objective at a time is simply counter-productive, he said.

Your brain takes time to adjust to the next thing, Hartnett said. If you give something less attention, your work will suffer, and you'll find that if you multi-task, you don't spend as much time on each item. When multi-tasking, you sometimes think you're working harder than you really are.

Adapted and excerpted from:

findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4181/is_20051129/ai_n15871071

1. Does this article support the idea of multi-tasking? Explain your answer.

2. When is multi-tasking a bad idea?

3. When is multi-tasking a good idea?

Tips for multi-tasking:

Do the most important thing first.

If your employer has given you a list of several things to do, prioritize them and begin working on the most important thing first.

Know when you work best.

Each person has a best time to be productive. Try to do those jobs that you find most difficult during the time you are at your best.

Organize your to-do list every day.

If you don't know what you should be doing, how can you manage your time to do it? Write yourself a to-do list each day at home and at work. This simple tool can really help you to stay focused and organized.

Schedule time for projects in large blocks rather than smaller chunks of time. Again this tip works well at home, too. If you plan to clean up your whole kitchen, top to bottom, it's a good idea to schedule this activity for when you have a large chunk of time.

1. How does the article describe *intertwining*? Was Jerry multi-tasking or intertwining?

- Imagine you are at work and given a large task, like receiving and putting away several boxes of inventory. The boxes arrive at 11:30 and you go to lunch at noon. Should you start before lunch? Why or why not?

Choose the right kind of activities when you need to multi-task.

Some activities just need to be done on their own. For example, when you are calculating the change to give to a customer you shouldn't be doing anything else! On the other hand, if you are working on a cash register, you can perform other tasks while you are waiting for customers.

Reflection

Before you read through this scenario, you rated your employability skills for being adaptable. Now rate your skills again using the scale below.

Rate your skills for being adaptable

- 1 = This skill is still very difficult for me.
- 2 = I understand this skill better but need more practice or experience.
- 3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Employability Skills for Being Adaptable	1	2	3
Work independently or as part of a team			
Learn from mistakes and accept feedback			
Be open and respond constructively to change			
Carry out multiple tasks			
Be innovative and resourceful			

After reading through this module, do you have a better understanding of the importance of being adaptable on the job? In your own words explain why being adaptable is important at work.

Do you think that your own skills to be adaptable have improved? Give an example of your adaptability skills.

Be Adaptable – Conclusion

If you want to practise your skills to be adaptable you can:

- Ask your instructor for more materials
- Be adaptable with friends and family members, i.e. do things the way they would like OR
- Do things the way you would like if that is a change for you
- Remind yourself daily that change is a constant force

Remember that employability skills are transferrable from the work place to the other areas of your life like home and community. Give two examples of how being adaptable is important in other parts of your life.

Be prepared to discuss all of your answers, ideas and reflections with your group or instructor. Insights into employability skills are best when shared!

Remember: Employability skills are the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work – whether you work on your own or as part of a team.

These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities.

Module Six Employability Skills: Learn Continuously

When you were younger you probably looked forward to the day when you would finish school and begin the rest of your life. But at some time you probably realised that learning doesn't end whenever you finish school. In order to be successful at work and in life, you need to be able to **learn continuously**.

Before You Read

A. Reflect on your attitude toward learning continuously.

1. Do you enjoy surfing the net to explore new websites?

2. Have you ever had to take training for work such as WHMIS or a course on food safety?

3. How do you think you would feel about taking training regularly at work? If you were offered optional training would you take it? Why or why not?

A. Rate your skills

Rate yourself on your ability to learn continuously

1 = I need to learn this.

2 = I need to do this more often.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Ability to Learn Continuously	1	2	3
Are you willing to continuously learn and grow?			
Can you assess your strengths and areas that need development?			
Do you set your own learning goals and then achieve them?			
Can you identify and access learning sources and opportunities?			

Scenarios

Find out how Erica and Jerry respond to opportunities to learn continuously in their workplaces.

Scenario One



“Good morning, Sam,” said Erica.

“What’s good about it,” Sam grumbled. Erica looked at him in surprise. Sam was quiet, but he was always in a good humour and very easy going. Why was he looking so glum?

“Is something wrong, Sam?”

“What I want to know is, what’s the point of owning your own business?” Sam demanded as though they were in the middle of a conversation instead of at the beginning. Sam was slapping a thick sheaf of papers for emphasis. Erica had only seen Sam so annoyed once before: at tax time.

“Is it the government, Sam?” she asked sympathetically.

“Who else? More regulations! I may as well lock the doors and work for Tim Horton’s baking doughnuts.”

Erica grinned to herself as she tied up her apron and washed her hands. She had a vision of the enormous Sam with one of those little visors on, serving coffee. She felt sorry for Sam and Edna having to deal with the government regulations all the time. Glad it's not me, Erica thought. But this time, she was wrong.

Edna spoke to Erica on Tuesday afternoon.

"Erica, you've been here almost six months now, and we are very happy with your work," said Edna.

"Thanks, Edna," Erica replied.

"Sam and I have been talking it over, and we have decided to put in a deli counter. There are quite a few offices in this area and not too many restaurants. We think we could do a good take-out business."

Erica nodded. A lot of people came in at lunch to ask if they did soup and sandwiches.

"Sam and I were wondering if you would like to run the deli counter," said Edna.

Erica stared at her in surprise. "But I like working in the bakery!" she blurted.

Edna shrugged her shoulders and sighed.

"All right. But this means we're going to have to hire a new employee to work the deli counter. Not only that, there are many more regulations around prepared food we're all going to have to learn. The government is very strict about food handling; well, you know that with the health inspector making those surprise visits. But it's even worse with prepared foods like sandwiches.

"The thing is, Erica, we're all going to have to learn how to do new things. For one thing, we all have to take a new food safety course."

"Will I have to do that?" Erica asked, "Won't my job be the same?" Erica was folding and unfolding the edge of her apron as she spoke. She felt comfortable in her job now. She had a routine each day that remained basically the same. She didn't want to learn about handling deli meats!

"If we put in the deli counter – and we're just waiting for the go-ahead from the bank to do it – everything is going to be different around here. What I need to know is, are you willing to learn new things as the bakery changes? That's what we need right now, someone who is willing to learn and grow with the business."

Erica nodded thoughtfully. Learn and grow...that reminded her of something. That's right, CUES, she thought. Lisa had told them of the importance of being willing to learn and grow continuously. Erica had wondered about that. She knew that an employee had to train for a new

job, but once the training was over, wasn't that it? Not according to Lisa, and now not according to Edna either. Erica wondered, am I willing to learn and grow continuously? I guess if I want to keep my job, I'll have to!

"Okay Edna, I'll learn as much as I need to about the deli," said Erica, but she didn't feel too happy about it.

Now that you know Erica a little better, why do you think she is reluctant to learn about the deli?

Do you think it might actually be good for Erica to learn about the deli? Why?

Later that day, Edna and Sam got approval from the bank. The next few weeks were busy as sales people came in with glossy magazines illustrating everything from espresso machines to pastrami. It was bewildering and exciting to plan for the future. Sam and Edna consulted Erica too. It was her idea to have self-serve coffee from large pump pots. Sam and Edna thought that was a great suggestion and told her so.

Local business people were coming in daily to check the progress of the deli counter. Edna, Sam and Erica could all see that the deli was going to be a huge success. Edna began to talk to Sam about hiring two people. Erica heard this and thought some more.

At first Erica had been afraid of trying something new. But now that she had watched the deli counter being built and the supplies coming in, she was interested. Erica realised that working behind a deli counter would be similar to working behind the bakery counter. She knew how to slice bread and make sandwiches too. What will I be learning that's new, she wondered. She would have to learn more about food handling and safety. She would also have to work even harder at customer service. Erica realised that it would be good for her to practise her communication skills even more. At the deli counter she would be:

- using skills she already had
- practising skills that needed more work

- learning new skills around food preparation and food safety

I can do that! Erica thought.

“Edna? I know I said I didn’t want to work in the deli, but I think I’ve changed my mind. I would like to – at least part of the time,” said Erica.

“You would? That would be great Erica! Of course, you would have to do quite a bit more training and upgrade your food handling certificate,” said Edna.

“Yes I realise that,” said Erica. “I didn’t think so before, but now I’m looking forward to learning about the deli!”

Tools for Application



1. Do you think that Erica is now more willing to learn and grow continuously? Why or why not?

2. What do you think helped Erica make her decision to work at the deli counter?

3. What are Erica’s strengths that will help her to succeed in her new role at work?

4. What does Erica need to work on in order to succeed in her new role?



Activity

Go to the Tim Horton’s website at www.timhortons.com/en/index.html and click on *Join our team*. Next click on *Store opportunities* and then *Job descriptions*. Now you should be at www.timhortons.com/en/join/team-4.html. What is the first line on this page under the employee photos?

Read the descriptions of a **Store Front Employee** and a **Production Employee**. Choose which job you would prefer.

1. List the **strengths** you have for that job.

2. List the areas you need to **work on and develop** in order to succeed in the job.

Share your insights with the group or your instructor. Ask if they can suggest any strengths or an area that needs development to add to your list.

Scenario Two



On Monday morning, Jerry signed for a small package delivered by Purolator Courier. The waybill said it was from CMS Software Solutions.

“This must be the new parts software!” he exclaimed to Mark. Mark was counting sparkplugs, so he just grunted.

Later, Jerry told Randy that the new software had arrived.

“Great!” said Randy, who was balancing a cup of coffee, a phone and his briefcase. “I’m a little busy right now, Jerry, but I’ll look at it later today.”

That week Jerry took Wednesday off, but on Thursday he saw that the software had not even been opened. Jerry knew that it was year end and Randy was very busy

getting everything ready for his accountant. He also knew that Randy had hoped to use the software beginning the new business year.

Both Reg and Mark were able to use the computers at Swift Auto Parts without difficulty; however, neither of them was very interested in the new software system. When we have it, we'll learn it, they said.

Jerry, on the other hand, was very interested in the new software. After he had learned his computer skills at CUES, he had bought his first ever home computer. At first he was on it all of the time, and soon his kids were teasing him and calling him a 'computer geek'. Jerry's computer skills kept on improving as he explored new websites and software.

Now he wondered if he could help Randy by learning the new auto parts software first.

"That would be great if you could," said Randy. "The trouble is that we can't do it during business hours. It takes a while to load, and then we would have to train Mark and Reg."

"I can see that," said Jerry. "How about I take the manual home and have a look at it? Then if you don't mind, I could come in on a Sunday, load it and try it out."

"That's a terrific idea," said Randy. "Mondays are pretty quiet as a rule, so it would be a great day for training. Thanks Jerry!"

Jerry decided to take the manual home that evening. He wanted to make sure that he was prepared for the installation by reading the installation sections. He noted the tech support numbers and was relieved to read that support was available seven days a week. He also saw that CMS Software Solutions had their own webpage. When he accessed their site he found a tutorial for the new software. I'll do that tomorrow night, he thought.

By Sunday, Jerry had read the relevant parts in the manual and taken the short tutorial. He had the technical support numbers on hand.

The installation went smoothly. Jerry tested the various software functions with the built-in training tutorial. He was having trouble with the 30 day invoice transactions, so he called the tech support line. They were helpful and able to come up with a solution. By late Sunday afternoon, Jerry was confident that he could teach Randy, Reg and Mark how to use the new software.

Tools for Application



1. Go back to the beginning of this module where you rated yourself on your ability to learn continuously. Which of the continuous learning skills is Jerry using in this scenario?

2. What were Jerry's learning goals?

3. Which learning sources and opportunities did Jerry access?



Activity

Choose one of the two scenarios below as a project you might like to work on.

Project A
You are building a fence for your own or a friend's back yard. You have never done this before.

Project B
You are planting your first garden.

1. List at least two learning goals for the project you have chosen. (Is there anything you would like to learn before you begin this project? Is there anything you would like to have learned after you have finished this project?)

2. What learning opportunities and resources would you use to find out more about your project. (Where could you find information on your project? Internet, building and garden centres, etc.)

Lifelong Learning

- A. Learning continuously is also known as ‘lifelong learning’. Go to the CanLearn website on lifelong learning: www.canlearn.ca/eng/lifelong/index.shtml.

Click on the links below *‘Explore Lifelong Learning’* and answer the following questions.

1. What are the categories of lifelong learning? Give personal learning examples for two categories.

2. What are the benefits of lifelong learning? Which benefits have you received?

- B. Click on the following web link to learn more about how important lifelong learning is in Canada and the world.

<http://www.unesco.ca/en/activity/education/AdultLearners.aspx>

Reflection

Before you read through these scenarios, you rated your ability to learn continuously. Now rate your ability again using the scale below.

Rate yourself on your positive attitudes and behaviours.

1 = This skill is very difficult for me.

2 = I understand this skill better but need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Ability to Learn Continuously	1	2	3
Are you willing to continuously learn and grow?			
Can you assess your strengths and areas that need development?			
Do you set your own learning goals and then achieve them?			
Can you identify and access learning sources and opportunities?			

Learning Continuously – Conclusion

If you want to improve your ability to learn continuously you can:

- Ask for more information from your instructor
- Practice by learning something new everyday
- Find out about free or small fee workshops offered in your community and take one
- Research one new subject on the internet each week

Remember that employability skills are transferrable from the work place to the other areas of your life like home and community. Give two examples of how learning continuously is important in other parts of your life.

Be prepared to discuss all of your answers, ideas and reflections with your group or instructor. Insights into employability skills are best when shared!

Remember: Employability skills are the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work – whether you work on your own or as part of a team.

These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities.

Module Seven Employability Skills: Work with Others

There are very few jobs available where people work entirely on their own. When you get a job you will be sharing your work hours with other employees. How well you are able to get along and work together will determine whether or not you are a good team player. Employers will value your individual gifts and abilities. They will value you even more if you can use these skills as you work well with others.

Before you read:

A. Reflect on your ability to work with others.

1. Do you enjoy working in a group in class?

2. If you have a home project to complete do you invite others to come and help you?

3. How do you respond if you are working in a group and someone wants to do things differently?

4. How do you respond if there is major disagreement in the group?

C. Rate your skills

Rate yourself on your ability to work with others.

1 = I need to learn this.

2 = I need more practice or experience

3 = I have this skill

Rate Your Skills to Work with Others	1	2	3
Understand and work within the dynamics of a group			
Be respectful, supportive and open to thoughts, opinions and contributions of others in a group			
Recognize and respect group members' diversity, individual differences and perspectives			
Understand that sometimes conflict in a group is necessary in order to reach solutions			
Help manage and resolve conflict when appropriate			

Scenarios

In the following scenarios, Erica and Jerry learn about the importance of working with others



Scenario One

Erica blinked back the tears from her burning eyes. Only one more onion to go, and then I can move on to the tomatoes, she thought. It was 10 o'clock in the morning at Dough Dude's Deli Counter, and Erica, with the help of Sam's nephew, Ryan, was prepping food for the lunch rush.

And it was a rush. The deli counter had exceeded expectations. Sam and Edna had needed to hire two more staff just to keep up with the demand. Now Erica worked at the deli counter every day from 9:30 to

1:30 and switched to the bakery after she had eaten her lunch. She liked the pace and found that her days just flew by.

But Erica was struggling with the staff changes. As she began to chop the tomatoes, Erica thought about all of the changes she had experienced at Dough Dude Bakery. At first, it had taken her a long time to warm up to Sam and Edna. She had been shy, but soon Sam and Edna had felt like good friends. Now, she had two more people to work with, and Erica was feeling shy all over again. Ryan was only there for the summer. He was about Erica's age and was in college. He loved to joke around and flirt with Erica.

Jackie was the second new employee. She worked in the deli daily from 11 am until 4 pm. She was very friendly with customers, but Erica thought that she was a bit too bossy. Jackie was old enough to be Erica's mother, and Erica thought that might be why she was always telling her (Erica) what to do.

Erica also felt that Sam and Edna had changed. Erica used to spend the first part of everyday with Sam. Now usually he and Ryan were talking when Erica arrived at work. It seemed to Erica that Edna and Jackie spent a lot of time together too.

Erica thought about the difference between three people working together in a bakery and five people working together in a bakery deli. How could two new people create such changes? And what are the changes, Erica wondered as she rapidly sliced through the juicy red tomatoes. For one thing, she thought, I spend less time alone with Sam and Edna. For another, I have to put up with Ryan and Jackie. I don't really mind either one of them: they're just – different!

“Will you slice the pickles too? I have to go and get more mustard and mayo from the back,” said Ryan. Erica nodded. If Ryan was going into the back that probably meant he would spend a few extra minutes there, chatting with his uncle. Erica looked up at the clock. Jackie would be arriving any minute. I wonder what she'll be bossing me about today, thought Erica.

Sure enough, Jackie asked Erica to switch the onions and tomatoes.

“What difference does it make?” Erica asked, irritated.

Jackie's eyes widened in surprise. Usually Erica was so quiet and shy. Oh well, maybe she isn't feeling well today, thought Jackie.

“The tomatoes should go next to the lettuce because that's what most people want – lettuce and tomato. It makes things go a lot faster if they're next to each other. Only a few want onions on their sandwiches,” said Jackie.

Erica switched the stainless steel containers of onions and tomatoes. She didn't mean to bang them into place, but she was feeling angry. She was glad the deli was so busy because she didn't want to talk to Jackie or Ryan. She also didn't want to admit that Jackie had been right about the placement of the tomatoes and onions.

After the lunch-time rush, Erica ate her own sandwich. She was joined shortly by Edna.

“Is everything all right, Erica?”

Erica looked surprised.

“I’m fine, Edna. Why?”

Edna looked uncomfortable. The good side to having the deli counter was that she and Sam were making a lot more money than they ever had in the bakery. The not so good side was that now they had more staff, they had staff problems!

“Well, both Ryan and Jackie have said that they are having a hard time working with you. You hardly talk to them and when you do, you’re not very friendly. They kind of get the feeling that you wish they weren’t here.” Edna paused and Erica could feel her face burning. “Of course, I told them you were kind of shy when you first started working here and that you would get over it.”

Silence filled the tiny lunchroom. Erica looked down at her half-eaten sandwich.

“I’m glad nothing’s wrong, Erica. I know you can do better with Ryan and Jackie if you want to.” Edna got up to leave and Erica crumbled her sandwich and threw it into the garbage.

Erica was glad that she worked the rest of the day with Sam. At first she felt angry with Ryan and Jackie. Why were they talking behind her back? She wasn’t unfriendly, she was just quiet. Wasn’t she? But Edna’s parting words kept coming back to Erica: *I know you can do better with Ryan and Jackie if you want to*. Deep down inside, Erica knew she could do better, too.

As she struggled to understand why she felt angry with Ryan and Jackie, she remembered they had talked about working in groups at CUES. Lisa had used the words ‘group dynamics’ to talk about the way that people related to one another in a group.

It was an easy lesson for Erica to remember, because Lisa had talked about group dynamics being like a recipe.

When Erica went home that evening, she dug out her lesson on group dynamics.

Working with Others – Group Dynamics

Group dynamics refer to the ways in which people interact and relate to one-another in a group situation.

Group dynamics are like baking.

Here is a basic muffin recipe:

2 cups of flour

1 cup of milk

1/3 cup butter

½ cup of sugar

1 egg

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon of salt

This recipe tastes fine just as it is. However, think about adding the following ingredients separately or in combination. How will the flavour of the muffins change?

Cinnamon Apple chunks

Raisins Grated cheese

Dates Blueberries

Carrot Bran

Each time you add a new ingredient, the flavour of the muffin changes. Groups are the same. Each time you add a new member, the dynamics of the group change.

After Erica had read her lesson again, she felt a little better. It's normal that things should feel different now, she thought. We've added some new ingredients to the bakery. Suddenly she saw that Ryan wasn't flirting and teasing to annoy her, he was just trying to be friendly. And Jackie wasn't being bossy; she knew a lot about working in a deli and the best way to go about things. I could learn a whole lot from her if I wanted, thought Erica.

It had been hard to hear what Edna had to say, but Erica knew that she was right. The CUES lesson helped her to see that she needed to practise being tolerant and more open to Ryan and Jackie.

Questions for Reflection

Edna says that now they have more staff, they have staff problems. Why do you think this is so?

What do you think are some of the reasons for Erica's unfriendliness?

Erica needed to understand the dynamics of the new group at Dough Dude. What are group dynamics?

Activity

Read the scenario below and then answer the questions that follow. Be prepared to share your thoughts and ideas with your group or instructor.



You work in a music store with three other employees. All of you like the same kind of music and you get along very well. Your boss hires another employee who loves opera and classical music. This employee does not seem to have much in common with any of you.

1. Why do you think your boss hired this employee?

2. How do you think that you will respond to this new employee?

3. What can this new employee contribute to your group?

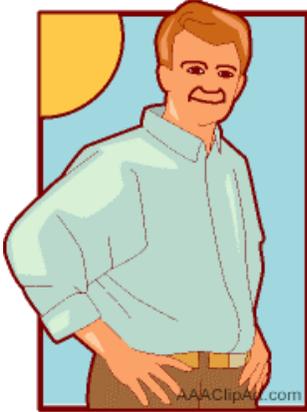
Now, imagine that you are the new employee and you start work at a music store. You don't feel like you have much in common with the staff who already work there.

4. How do you feel?

5. What will help you to make a valuable contribution at work?

6. What do you need from your co-workers to feel welcome?

Scenario Two



Jerry walked in to Swift Auto Parts. It was Friday afternoon and he would be working with both Reg and Mark until 6 pm when Mark went home. Friday afternoons were always busy with people coming in to buy parts for their cars that they would work on over the weekend.

“Hi Mark, hi Reg,” said Jerry. Reg said hi and Mark grunted and went into the back room. Jerry stared at them both in surprise.

“Something wrong?” Jerry asked Reg.

“Not with *me*,” Reg snapped.

“Nothing wrong with me, either,” came a loud voice from the parts room.

Jerry did not know what to say. Both Mark and Reg were angry, but he didn’t know why.

He was to find out soon enough.

Reg took lunch first. The door had barely closed behind him when Mark said,

“Do you know what happened this morning? I had to run around finding parts that Reg had already put away from a big order. I hadn’t ticked off the invoice yet. He should have asked me!”

Jerry wasn’t too clear on what Mark meant, but they were too busy for him to ask him any questions. When Reg returned from lunch Mark left. Jerry wondered what he would say. He didn’t have long to wait.

“Did Mark tell you about his screw up this morning?” Reg demanded.

“Um, something about parts you put away?” asked Jerry.

“Listen, when you see a bunch of stuff sitting on the counter, don’t you put it away? How are we supposed to help customers when the space is covered in spark plugs?” Reg fumed a bit more, but again, it was too busy to have a conversation.

That afternoon Reg and Mark snapped at one another and hurled insults in between customers. Jerry didn’t say anything for a while because he thought that Reg and Mark might eventually come up with a solution. Jerry had noticed that Mark and Reg received stock very differently. Reg would dig out the invoice first. Then he would tick off the stock as he took it out of the box. He would put those parts away and then take out some more. It was tidy, but time consuming.

Mark took everything out of the box first and then marked it off on the invoice. This way he could see everything and tick it off quickly. This system was faster but messy.

“I don’t think it’s better to have everything all over the counter!” yelled Reg.

“Well I don’t want to waste my time pulling out one spark plug at a time!” retorted Mark.

“I’m glad you guys see the problem so clearly,” said Jerry. Mark and Reg stopped yelling and stared at Jerry, who continued. “You both have very different systems of receiving inventory, right? That’s why you’re arguing. My way is different too. Maybe this shows that we all need to use the same system.”

Reg looked mulish. “I’m not using his system.”

“And I’m not using his,” said Mark.

“Maybe we need to decide what works the best,” said Jerry. “If we each describe what we do and why we do it, maybe we can come up with a system that we all like.”

Mark and Reg agreed to give this a try.

Reflection

When people work together, sometimes there is conflict. In this case, it is because Mark and Reg do things differently. Each thinks that his way of doing things is better.



Describe a time when you have had to work with someone else. It might have been on a school project, tasks at work or even working in the kitchen. Did you get along with the other person? Was there conflict? Try and remember what made things work and what made things difficult. Write these points down and share them with your group or instructor.

Conflict can be a normal part of working together. For example, even though Mark and Reg were angry with one another, their conflict raised an important work issue.

What was the important issue that was raised thanks to the conflict between Mark and Reg?

Sometimes conflict is not healthy at work. For example, sometimes a worker might be in a bad mood because of something that happened before he or she even arrived at work. This worker might take out their frustration and anger on their fellow employees. In this case, conflict is not helpful. A rule of thumb is that conflict is healthy when it helps to solve a problem. It is not healthy if it has nothing to do with work or if it is a personal attack.

Activity

The following is a list of situations where there is conflict. Decide which might be helpful for work and which will not. Explain your answer.

1. Jerry likes to park his car in the far corner of the Swift Auto Parts parking lot. When he arrives at work he is angry because Reg has already parked his motorcycle there. He goes into Swift and tells off Reg.



Helpful conflict ____ Unhelpful conflict ____

2. Erica was up all night with her daughter. She was very tired at work and argued with Jackie and Ryan about prepping vegetables for the deli sandwiches. Edna became angry with her and asked Erica to come into her office. Erica was upset and told her how she felt about the changes at Dough Dude.

Helpful conflict ____ Unhelpful conflict ____

3. Keith's Jamaican friend, Ramsay, joined the work crew at Straight Path Construction, and Jason made a joke about his construction hat not fitting over his dreadlocks. Keith overheard and hit Jason in the nose. Jason gave Keith a black eye. Ramsay and Mario broke up the fight.

Helpful conflict ____ Unhelpful conflict ____

(Hint: This conflict might be both helpful and unhelpful!)

Working Together – Conclusion

You have been working on this Employability curriculum for a while now. You have been working with your instructor and others in a group. How has it been?

- Have you always listened (though not always agreed) to one another's points of view?
- Have you learned from one another?
- Have you respected one another's differences?
- Has there been conflict that has helped you to reach a better understanding?

If you can answer yes to any or all of these questions you are improving a valuable employability skill: working with others.

Do you think that you could use more help with this employability skill? If so, ask your instructor for some extra help. Also, you can visit the websites below:

www.wordscapes.net/working_well.htm

www.hpb.gov.sg/hpb/default.asp?pg_id=865&aid=1222

You can practise working with others whenever you are in a group.

Reflection

Before you read through these scenarios, you rated your employability skills to work with others. Now rate them again using the scale below.

Rate yourself on your ability to work with others.

1 = This skill is very difficult for me.

2 = I understand this skill better but need more practice or experience.

3 = I have this skill.

Rate Your Skills to Work with Others	1	2	3
Understand and work within the dynamics of a group			
Be respectful, supportive and open to thoughts, opinions and contributions of others in a group			
Recognize and respect group members' diversity, individual differences and perspectives			
Understand that sometimes conflict in a group is necessary in order to reach solutions			
Help manage and resolve conflict when appropriate			

Remember that employability skills are transferrable from the work place to the other areas of your life like home and community. Give two examples of how working with others is important in other parts of your life.

Be prepared to discuss all of your answers, ideas and reflections with your group or instructor. Insights into employability skills are best when shared!

Module Eight – Put your skills together for job search

If you have worked through all seven modules of this curriculum, congratulations! You have been practising many vital job skills, which will help you to successfully apply for and get the job you want. Along with reading, writing and math, you have improved essential employability skills. Now that you have these skills, how will you let your future employer know? In this final module we will take a look at three vital tools for getting hired: the resumé, the cover letter and the interview. Let's see how they teach these tools at CUES.

Lisa was really enjoying her work at CUES this year. She had several students who had worked hard at improving their reading, writing and math skills. They had also worked on some other employability skills:

- *Good communication*
- *Demonstrating Positive Attitudes and Behaviours*
- *Being Responsible*
- *Being Adaptable*
- *Learning Continuously*
- *Working Safely*
- *Working with Others*



All of the students felt that they had learned new skills and improved skills they already had. They were ready to begin applying for jobs and wanted to work on their resúés. Lisa knew that there was a lot more to getting a job than just having a good resumé. She was wondering about the best way to talk to her students about job search skills. As she sat at her desk and thought, a head appeared around the edge of her door. It was Keith, popping in just as he had so often done when he was a student at CUES.



“Keith! How nice to see you! How are things?” said Lisa.

“Hey, Lisa! Things are great, thanks.” Keith replied.

“Still working in construction?” Lisa asked.

“Yep. I’m going into an apprenticeship program this fall,” Keith said proudly.

“That’s great news, Keith. Congratulations!” Lisa paused for a moment. She had just had a very good idea. “Where are you working now, Keith?”

Keith laughed. “You’re not going to be too happy about this, Lisa. We have to tear up the sidewalks right outside of CUES. That’s why I can drop by and see you – I’m on my break right now.”

“Keith, would you have time to come in and tell the students how you got the job at Straight Path Construction? You know, let them see your resumé and ask you about the interview process,” said Lisa.

“I’ll have to ask my foreman, but as long as it isn’t for too long or if I could do it on my lunch. I’m sure it would be okay.”

“Great! If I scheduled it for say, 11:30 this Friday would that be all right with you?”

“That’s a good time for me; I would just be starting my lunch break. I hope I’ll still have enough time to eat!”

“Of course you will, Keith. And because you’re taking the time to help the students at CUES, lunch will be on us!” said Lisa.

That Friday Keith walked into CUES a few minutes before 11:30. The first person he saw was Erica.



“Hey, Erica, how’s it going? Are you still here at CUES?”

“No! I’ve been working for nearly a year now. How about you?” said Erica.

“I’m in construction,” said Keith.

“Good morning!” said Lisa to Keith and Erica. “Did you both bring your resumé and cover letters?” Erica handed Lisa a copy of her resumé and cover letter.

“Here’s my resumé,” said Keith. “Sorry, I couldn’t find my cover letter.”

“That’s okay, this is great,” said Lisa. “I am so happy that you are both willing to let me use these documents. Now let’s go into the class and see if they have any questions for you.”

In the class Lisa introduced Keith and Erica to the learners. She asked Keith and Erica to describe their jobs. Then the class asked questions.

Some of the questions were around hours and rate of pay. Others were about job specific skills. One person wanted to know if it was hard to hold a jack-hammer. Another wanted to know if Erica decorated cakes. Finally, one person asked,

“What are the most important skills for your job?”

Keith answered this question.

“They aren’t what you might think,” he said with a laugh. “Before I started working with Straight Path Construction, I thought my most important skills would be about, well, construction! And of course, they want you to have some skills in this area. But if you’re like me, you’re starting out with a basic job, and they don’t expect you to know all about construction work.” Keith paused and thought about the past several months of work at Straight Path Construction. Then he said,

“I have to say getting to work on time is really important in construction.” Two of the guys in the class were staring at him like he was crazy, so he continued, “Just think about it. If you’ve got four guys working on a crew and one of them is a half hour late, that’s two hours of labour that your boss has paid for that hasn’t been done. “

Do you understand Keith’s math?

“Another thing that’s really important is being able to get along with the guys you work with. I might not like everyone at work, but I can get along with them.” Keith grinned. “I have to admit, this one took me some practice!” The class laughed. Some of them had been there when Keith was a student, and they weren’t surprised that he had to work at this skill!

“Lots of other skills are important in construction,” said Keith. “For example, I use math every day. There’s a lot of measuring on the site.”

“Thank you Keith,” said Lisa. She had noticed him glancing at the wall clock. “You should have time to have a sandwich in the lunch room before you head back to work.”

Erica was just wondering if she should leave too, when someone asked,

“What was your interview like?”

Erica thought she might get this question. She had decided it was very important to answer truthfully and clearly, so she had practised the night before.

“For me it was very scary! I was so nervous and not very confident of my speaking skills,” she said. “Thanks to Lisa and CUES my resumé and covering letter looked good, but during the interview I was on my own. Lisa had coached me and given me some good tips. I know that I wouldn’t have made it without practising ahead of time.” Erica paused and looked at the clock. 12:35! “Sorry Lisa – I’ve got to get going,” she said.

“That’s all right, Erica. Thank you so much for taking the time to share your experience. There are sandwiches in the lunch room; you can grab one for the bus!”

After Keith and Erica left, Lisa handed out copies of their resumes to the class.

“We’re using their resumés because they are excellent examples of how your resumé can work for you. Keith has had many jobs, but until he began working for Straight Path Construction, he did not stay employed for very long. Erica had not worked outside the home before she began working at Dough Dude Bakery. Let’s take a look at their resumés and see how they have adapted them to their specific needs.”

Part One: Resumés

Lisa pointed out the important things to notice in Keith and Erica’s resumés. Then she asked the class to research more information about resumé writing. Below are some of the websites they used.

Before we look at Keith and Erica’s resumés, check out the websites on resumé writing and resumé tips below, and answer the questions that follow.

ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Write-a-Resume&id=1263412

What are the key topics to include on a resumé?

www.huronuc.ca/student_life/career_employment_services/effective_resume_tips/

What else might you include in your resumé?

ezinearticles.com/?Choosing-a-Resume-Format&id=1235253

What are the three resumé formats? Which do you think that you will choose for your resumé and why?

ezinearticles.com/?7-Things-To-Never-Include-In-A-Resume&id=1075778

What seven things should you never include in your resume?

Keith Michaud

435 Hemlock Street
Timmins, Ontario P4N 0X0
(705)929-2202

Objective: To work in the construction industry to gain experience that will help me prepare for apprenticeship.

Related Work History

- Phil's Carpentry and Cabinet-Making 2006. Worked as an assistant. Measured and cut lengths of lumber. Helped prepare sub-floors. Attached hardware to kitchen cabinets. Learned new skills and safety practices around using a circular saw and a band saw.
- Bernie's Roof and Tile 2006. Worked all summer roofing . Replaced plywood, sealing, shingles. Put on new roofs in shingle and tile. Replaced eavestroughing. Worked on my own and as part of a team.
- Larry's Landscaping 2007. Cut grass and trimmed edges. Dug holes for ponds. Removed stumps. Used a chainsaw. Maintained equipment. Observed important safety practices.
- Enzo's Flooring 2007. Laid tile and carpeting. Measured and calculated area for flooring materials.

Education

Timmins High and Vocational School 2005

- Completed grade ten and 3 credits towards grade eleven.

Centre for Upgrading and Employability Skills (CUES) 2008

- Upgrading academic skills in reading, writing and math.
- Increased and improved employability skills

Further Training

- WHMIS
- Chainsaw Operator's Certificate

What does Keith's "objective statement" tell a construction employer?

Keith has also had jobs in two restaurants, a bowling alley and a pool hall. Why doesn't he include this experience on his resume?

Look at the work history that Keith has included and list the employability skills that he has mentioned.

Many resumes list "education" first. Why do you think Keith's "education" comes after "work experience"?

Keith also has a food safety certificate that he received when he worked in a restaurant. Do you think that he should have included this under "further training"? Why or why not?

Tells employer that Keith plans to remain in construction.

Keith Michaud
435 Hemlock Street
Timmins, Ontario P4N 0X0
(705)929-2202

Objective: To work in the construction industry to gain experience that will help me prepare for apprenticeship.

Related Work History

Keith has too much work experience, so he selects what to put here.

Keith includes employability skills with each job.

- Phil's Carpentry and Cabinet-Making 2006. Worked as an assistant. Measured and cut lengths of lumber. Helped prepare sub-floors. Attached hardware to kitchen cabinets. Learned new skills and safety practices around using a circular saw and a band saw.
- Bernie's Roof and Tile 2006. Worked all summer roofing . Replaced plywood, sealing, shingles. Put on new roofs in shingle and tile. Replaced eavestroughing. Worked on my own and as part of a team.
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Education

Centre for Upgrading and Employability Skills (CUES) 2008

- Upgrading academic skills in reading, writing and math
- Increased and improved employability skills

Timmins High and Vocational School 2005

- Completed grade ten and 3 credits towards grade eleven

Keith does not have much to include under education, so this section comes after work experience.

Further Training

- WHMIS
- Chainsaw Operators Certificate

This training would be of interest to a construction firm, so Keith includes it here.

Erica McGuire

193 Nickel Avenue

Timmins, Ontario

P4K 0X0

(705)929-5534

Objective: To become an assistant baker by using my baking skills and working hard to learn new skills.

Education

Centre for Upgrading and Employability Skills (CUES) 2008

- Upgrading academic skills in reading, writing and math
- Increased and improved employability skills

Timmins High and Vocational School 2004

- Graduate, grade 12 diploma

Experience

Catering, St. George's Anglican Church 2006-2007

- Made and served sandwiches
- Baked pies and other desserts
- Problem solving: converted recipes for larger quantities
- Worked independently and as part of a team

Childcare, self-employed 2005-2007

- Cared for three children

- Set goals and priorities for children and myself each day
- Showed interest, initiative and effort in work
- Offered reliable childcare with flexible hours

Further Training

Red Cross Child Care, First Aid and CPR course

How is the set up of Erica's resume different from Keith's?

Why do you think that Erica has chosen this format?

Which employability skills has Erica included under "experience"?

Keith did not include his restaurant, pool hall and bowling alley experience because these jobs weren't relevant to construction. However, in her resume, Erica includes her childcare experience. Why do you think this is so?

Always double and triple check content information. Make sure it is correct!

Erica McGuire

193 Nickel Avenue
Timmins, Ontario
P4K 0X0
(705)929-5534

Objective should always relate to the job you are applying for.

Objective: To become an assistant baker by using my baking skills and working hard to learn new skills.

Education

Erica uses a larger font for headings to take up space

Centre for Upgrading and Employability Skills (CUES) 2008

- Upgrading academic skills in reading, writing and math
- Increased and improved employability skills

Timmins High and Vocational School 2004

- Graduate, grade 12 diploma

Because Erica has a grade 12 diploma, it comes before her experience, which isn't very strong.

Experience

Catering, St. George's Anglican Church 2006-2007

- Made and served sandwiches
- Baked pies and other desserts
- Problem solving: converted recipes for larger quantities
- Worked independently and as part of a team

Erica volunteered at her church, so this catering work is still experience, even though she did not get paid.

Childcare, self-employed 2005-2007

- Cared for three children

- Set goals and priorities for children and myself each day
- Showed interest, initiative and effort in work
- Offered reliable childcare with flexible hours

Think of your resumé as a marketing tool. Your resumé should draw attention to who you are and how your experience and education will help to make a positive contribution to your prospective workplace.

Try and think of how your employer will see your resumé. Remember that your prospective employer is only interested in what you can do for his or her business. He or she is not interested in your personal history if it doesn't relate to the job.

Your resumé should relate directly to the job you are applying for. Each time you apply for a new job, you should make sure that the experience and skills you have listed relate to that job. At the very least, you should change your objective statement for each job application.

Your resumé should supplement (add to) the information you include on the job application. If you have had to fill out a job application, make sure that your resumé doesn't just repeat the same information, but adds to it. Ask yourself what skills you have used at other jobs or in your life that would benefit your future employer. Make sure to include these in your resumé. See Erica's and Keith's resúmes – they have included employability skills in their "experience" sections.

Further Training

Red Cross Child Care, First Aid and CPR course

Resumé Writing – Conclusion

You know that there are many books and websites that give advice and techniques about resumé writing. Remember to keep these basic points in mind when you are writing your own resumé

Assignment One

Update or create your resumé. Use the tips you have learned in this chapter to either improve the resumé you already have or create a new one. Write an **Objective** that is specific to a job that you would like to apply for.

Part Two: Covering Letter

Why does a resumé need a covering letter?

- Tells employer what job you're applying for
- Tells them you are familiar with their business (but only if you are!)
- Tells them why you are interested in the job and why you are a good candidate
- Points them to your resumé and highlights skills that might encourage them to read it

Let's take a look at Erica's covering letter below and see whether or not she includes these important points.

Erica McGuire

193 Nickel Avenue
Timmins, Ontario
P4K 0X0
(705)929-5534

May 12, 20__

Dear Sir/Madam:

I hope you will consider my application for the position of **Baker's Helper** that you recently advertised in the *Timmins Times*.

Dough Dude is my favourite bakery and I often buy my bread and cakes there. I have been baking at home and for my church's catering business for many years and would appreciate learning more about baking professionally. As you can see from my resumé, catering at St. George's has already given me some experience in baking large quantities. I am also a reliable and responsible worker and am able to work flexible hours.

Thank you for taking the time to read my resumé. I hope that in an interview you can talk more about what you are looking for in a baker's helper and how I can use my skills for Dough Dude Bakery.

Sincerely,

Erica McGuire

How did Erica do with her covering letter? Did she include all of the important points? Print out a copy of Erica's letter and underline the important points that she has included.

Read over the material on covering letters on the websites below. Then answer the questions that follow.

jobsadvice.guardian.co.uk/coveringletters/story/0,,1181540,00.html

ezinearticles.com/?Cover-Letter-Advice-and-Cover-Letter-Examples&id=1274562

owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/549/02/

1. List five covering letter no-nos.

2. True or false.

T F A good covering letter is at least a full page long.

T F The format is not important in a covering letter.

T F Never ask for an interview in a covering letter.

T F Thank the reader in a covering letter.

3. What are the four basic parts of a covering letter?

Assignment Two

Keith could not find his covering letter for Straight Path Construction. Write a covering letter for his resumé. Here is some more information that might be useful to you.

- Keith is applying to be a labourer or skilled trades helper
- Straight Path Construction worked on the road outside of Keith's house. They worked quickly and did a good job repaving the roads.
- Keith became friendly with one of the foremen, Bill Samos, who suggested that Keith apply for work at Straight Path Construction.
- Keith writes his letter to Bill because he is a foreman with Straight Path Construction.

Linking your resumé and covering letter with job ads

You don't always have to respond to a job ad in order to apply for a job. For example, Keith found out about the job at Straight Path Construction through one of the foremen. Sometimes people seeking employment can just drop off a resumé and covering letter at a place they would like to work. For example, if you wanted to work as a florist assistant, you could take copies of your resumé and covering letter to several florists.



Sometimes, however, you will be responding to a specific job ad. This is how Erica got the job at Dough Dude Bakery. Below is a copy of the ad that Erica saw in the *Timmins Times*.

Full-time baker's helper required for busy bakery. Only mature, reliable individuals able to work well with others need apply. Must be able to work some early mornings, evenings and weekends. Baking experience an asset.

Send resume to:
PO Box 345
Timmins, ON P4H 1O1

Information contained in job ads can be very helpful when you are preparing your resumé and covering letter. Look at the ad that Edna and Sam placed in the *Timmins Times* for Dough Dude Bakery.

What are they looking for in an employee?

How do you know that these skills and qualities are even more important than baking experience?

When Erica was preparing her resumé and covering letter, Lisa helped her to include these qualities and skills in her material.

Go back to Erica’s resumé and covering letter. Has she managed to convey that she is mature and reliable as well as able to work early mornings, evenings and weekends? Write down the parts in Erica’s resumé and covering letter that give this information. You can see that Erica was able to look at the skills and qualities that were needed at Dough Dude and include them in her resumé and covering letter. This is a very important job search skill: matching the skills, experience and qualities noted in a job ad with the skills, experience and qualities that you already possess. Let’s take a closer look at what Erica has done.

Dough Dude wants	Erica’s resume says	Erica’s covering letter says
Mature and reliable		Reliable and responsible worker
Work well with others	Worked independently and as part of a team	
Must be able to work some early mornings, evenings and weekends	Offered reliable childcare with flexible hours	Able to work flexible hours
Baking experience an asset	Catering, baking pies and other desserts	Catering, baking in large quantities

Assignment Three

Here is a job ad adapted from Workopolis.ca Make a list of the skills and abilities the employer is looking for, and write a covering letter to Marcy Edgecumbe.

- Choose two of the skills and qualifications that are listed in the ad to focus on in your letter.
- Include all of the components of a good covering letter.

Position: General Labourer

Location: Calgary

What we offer:

- *Competitive wages: \$14.00/hour
- *Daytime shift, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
- *Great team to work with
- *Excellent company

Duties and Responsibilities :

- *General warehouse and organizational duties
- *Picking, sorting, and separating the orders
- *Some heavy lifting (30 - 50lbs)
- *Proper warehouse organizational procedures and processes.
- *Follow all health and safety guidelines

Skills and Qualifications:

- *Able to work in a team oriented environment
- *Good work ethic
- *Ability to lift up to 50lbs
- *Limited experience necessary, however experience is an asset

Apply today with your resumé for our exciting career opportunities. For immediate consideration send a resume to:

Marcy Edgecumbe

Randstad Industrial Division Randstad Calgary South

100-5824 2nd Street SW Calgary, AB, T2H 0H2

(MS WORD FORMAT ONLY)

Part Three: Job Interview

While she was talking to the class at CUES, Erica said that her interview was “scary”. What does she say that she did ahead of time that made a difference?



A. When you are preparing for a job interview you are already at an advantage.

- The employer only interviews job searchers they want to hire.
- Clearly, the employer is impressed by your covering letter and resumé.
- You can practise ahead of time.

B. How do you practise and prepare for a job interview? Part of the preparation is knowing what to expect. Here are some points to keep in mind.

- Interviewers don't interview very often. Therefore, they are sometimes as nervous as you are!
- Interviewers are impressed by applicants who arrive a few minutes early and are dressed appropriately.
- Interviewers expect applicants to be able to answer their questions and to have a few questions of their own.

C. What are the kinds of questions that you will be asked in an interview? Some of them will be like these. Make sure you are able to answer them!

- Why do you want to work for our company?
- What skills will you bring to your work?
- How would you describe your working style or how would you describe yourself on the job?

D. More experienced interviewers might ask you questions about your employability skills or essential skills. For example, they may ask questions like:

- Give an example of how you might solve this problem (and they will outline a scenario).
- Give an example of how you have worked well with others.

E. The interview provides you another opportunity to showcase your employability skills. How do you choose which ones to talk about? One of the best ways is to **research** the employer's company.

- Do they have a website?
- Are you able to visit their location?
- Did they put out a job ad?

These are all valuable resources that will help you to learn more about your future employer and the employability skills they are looking for.

F. Once you have found out all that you can about the employer, **rehearse** your interview. Use the questions in C and D above and rehearse out loud.

- Write down your answers.
- Read them out loud.
- Practise in front of a mirror.
- Practise with one or two others asking you the questions.

G. During the interview: relax! This may sound silly, but don't forget to breathe. Breathing deeply helps to calm you. You will be able to speak more clearly if you have been taking long deep breaths. Practise these as you wait to be called into the interview.

H. Ask questions. The employer always appreciates interest in their company. While you are doing your research, try and come up with two or three questions about the company that show your genuine interest.

I. Thank the employer for the opportunity to be interviewed.

Assignment Four

Choose **one** of the two job ads that follow and apply for the posted job.

- Prepare your resumé
- Write a covering letter
- Prepare for an interview
- Make sure to include employability skills in your preparation

Your instructor or a volunteer will interview you for the job.



TRUCK UNLOADER



Zellers is currently recruiting for the following position(s):

Position: Receiver (Truck Unloaders) Overnight

Location: Zellers Brentwood Mall

Position Overview:

- Accountable to follow correct procedures when receiving, unloading and verification of quantities on all incoming shipments as well as the timely movement of out-going merchandise. Also responsible for sorting shipment and maintaining stockroom organization and cleanliness.

Position Highlights:

- Efficient, accurate receiving of all shipments. Verify carton counts, inspect for damage.
- Merchandise sorted, stored & moved through the stockroom protected from damage or theft.
- Acknowledge/manifest all incoming/outgoing shipments on a timely basis. Maintain transportation in/out records.
- Communication with supervisor on all stockroom issues.
- Stockroom efficiency, including clean-up, maintenance & fixturing duties.
- Health & Safety. Ensure the stockroom is compliant with all Health & Safety programs.

Qualifications:

- Self-motivated, organized and detail-oriented.
- Comfortable using all equipment. Ability to learn new systems and procedures.
- Good communication skills and professional manner.
- Able to lift heavy merchandise

Job Details:

Full time position

Tues - Sat 12am to 8am

Contact Details:

submit applications to Dal Percey

#300-4567 Lougheed Hwy, Burnaby, BC

Cashiers/Sales Associates

Zellers is currently recruiting for the following position(s):

Position: Checkout Service Associate

Location: #264 – Brentwood Mall, Burnaby, B.C.

Position Highlights:

- Support and promote all loyalty programs
- Responsibility will be to greet, assist and accommodate customers in all aspects of customer service in an environment of speed, convenience and friendliness
- To provide proactive personalized customer service to each and every customer entering the check out operation
- Ability to resolve customer issues/concerns at point of contact
- Responsible for the accurate operation of an assigned registers in accordance with all related policy and procedures

Qualifications:

- Friendly, outgoing, customer focused individuals who excel in a team environment
- Previous retail experience an asset
- Effective communications skills
- Highly motivated
- Available Evenings & Weekends
- Demonstrated Punctuality and Reliability

Job Details:

Full and Part-time positions available. Some evenings and weekends.

Contact Details:

Contact name: Dal Percey
Address: #300-4567 Lougheed Hwy
On site, applications are accepted

Employability Skills – Conclusion

If you have worked through all eight modules, you will know how important employability skills are to getting and keeping a good job.

Learning about and improving your employability skills won't end when you finally close this book or program. As you take further training or get work experience you will be building on your employability skills.

Don't be discouraged if some skills were harder for you than others. As you have discovered, employability skills can be learned and practised. The better your skills become, the better your opportunities for satisfying work and advancement.

Good luck with your Employability Skills and job search!