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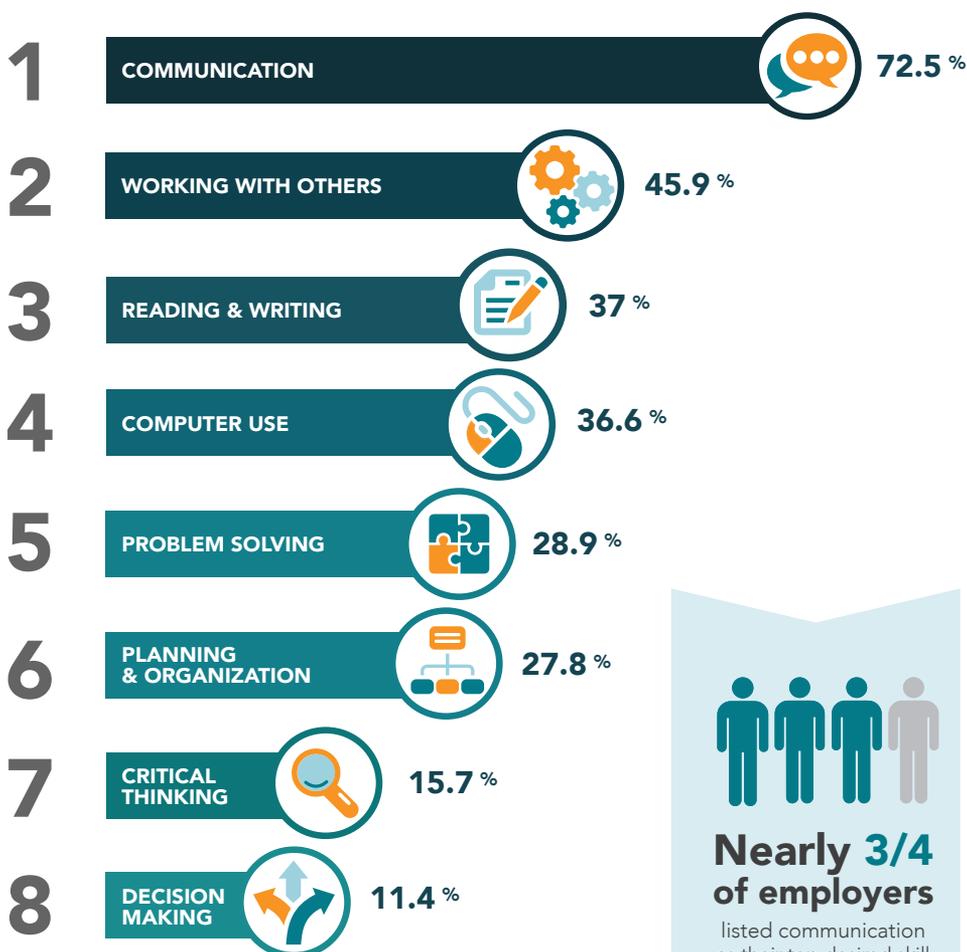
# TOP ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE

## Essential skills are just that: essential.

As part of our monthly Job Vacancy Study, we have uncovered the top skills that employers are looking for in their job postings. Not only are these “soft skills” crucial in finding and retaining employment, but they are also a necessary part of every day life.

This guide looks closer at these skills and gives examples of how they might be used in the workplace.

The essential skills are ranked according to the percentage of vacancies that listed the skill as a requirement.





# COMMUNICATION

The successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings, and the means of sending or receiving written and verbal information through telephone calls, email, or reports.

## EXAMPLE

In a retail setting, you will be required to use good communication skills in order to develop a rapport with customers. This will lead to repeat customers, good tips and will secure your place as a valuable employee.

### KEY SKILLS



Language  
comprehension & Usage



Expressing appropriate  
thoughts & ideas



Listening

### WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Dealing with customers & clients
- Being trained or training others
- Writing e-mails to co-workers & employers regarding work activities
- Having a discussion with co-workers or employers about work
- During the initial hiring period

*“ Punctuation Saves Lives: Let’s eat Grandma! vs Let’s eat, Grandma! ”*

### HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- ✓ Using common language to communicate information
- ✓ Asking for clarification or providing it when needed
- ✓ Making direct statements that are not easily misinterpreted
- ✓ Informing supervisors, managers and co-workers when the day’s plan is forced to change
- ✓ Using non-verbal communication appropriately
- ✓ Using proper spelling and grammar for written pieces of communication such as smiling & nodding
- ✓ Maintaining open discussion between yourself and other people without providing criticism or personal opinions





# WORKING WITH OTHERS

The ability to interact, coordinate or collaborate with others in an appropriate and respectful manner, and the ability to set aside differences to work toward a common goal.

## EXAMPLE

In a creative work environment, brainstorming meetings are often essential to the productivity of the business. In this instance, all those present will be relied upon to work together in order to layer ideas and come up with the best plans.

### KEY SKILLS



**Communication**



**Language comprehension**



**Keeping an open mind & not taking things personally**

### WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Working on a project with colleagues
- Participating in a partnership with another agency
- Sitting on a committee or board
- Training or in training
- Working on the floor with other colleagues

*“ None of us is as smart as all of us. ” - Ken Blanchard*

### HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:



- Maintaining open lines of communication with team members
- Cooperative decision making with the team
- Acknowledging and respecting the skills, ideas, and strengths of other team members and realizing that your idea is not always the best one
- Encouraging team members to contribute their own ideas to the project
- Keeping your own personal views and opinions to yourself
- Being able to form relationships with colleagues and partners in order to work toward a common goal



# READING & WRITING

The activity or skill of marking coherent words on paper, composing proper text using correct spelling and grammar and being able to understand and interpret the written word.

## EXAMPLE

While working in a restaurant as a server, you are required to write down the orders of your guests and then pass the order to the kitchen. If the chef can not understand your order, the guest will get the wrong meal.

## KEY SKILLS



Language comprehension



Spelling & grammar



Basic Sentence & paragraph structure

## WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Taking customer orders
- Sending emails
- Comprehending manuals & instructions
- Completing timesheets & work orders
- Transcribing phone messages

*If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write.  
Simple as that. - Stephen King*

## HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- ✓ Making lists of tasks to be completed
- ✓ Leaving instructions for co-workers
- ✓ Composing e-mails and responding to them
- ✓ Communicating transactions to colleagues
- ✓ Reviewing training manuals, policies, and procedures
- ✓ Preparing a report or memo describing work activities





# COMPUTER USE

The possession of moderate computer knowledge to allow use and navigation of basic programs such as Microsoft Office, as well as Internet and e-mail software.

## EXAMPLE

In an office environment you need to prepare a Powerpoint presentation on a project that consists of 20 slides.

### KEY SKILLS



**Computer Literacy & typing**



**Learn & retain instructions**



**Problem Solving**

### WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Using automated cash systems
- Using email
- Conducting internet searches
- Typing documents
- Navigating websites
- Operating databases
- Generating reports
- Preparing presentations

*" If at first you don't succeed, call it version 1.0 "*

### HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- ✓ Using various computer programs such as Microsoft Office
- ✓ Using a Point of Sale system
- ✓ Formulating documents and spreadsheets
- ✓ Navigating various software & websites to locate pertinent information for the job at hand
- ✓ Writing reports and e-mails
- ✓ Using the internet to research or read work related news articles online
- ✓ Problem solving through technical troubleshooting





# PROBLEM SOLVING

The process of systematically working through the details of a problem or issue in order to reach a solution. Problem solving is also the process of finding solutions to difficult or complex issues by weighing options, using tools & taking advantage of all available resources.

## EXAMPLE

In a retail environment, occasionally you will have to deal with difficult customers. In this event, you will use your problem solving skills to come up with the best solution as to how to handle a particular situation without taking it personally.

## KEY SKILLS



**Identifying potential issues**



**Critical thinking & Analysis**



**Initiative (Finding potential solutions on your own)**

## WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

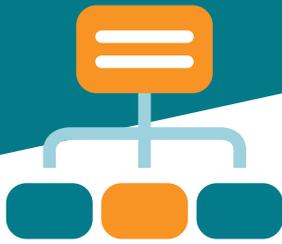
- Dealing with unhappy customers
- Resolving problems with co-workers
- Machinery failures
- Finding efficiencies
- Being realistic about solutions

*" I love deadlines. I especially like the whooshing sound they make as they go flying by. "*

## HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- Dealing with difficult customers
- Completing difficult tasks
- Facing an unexpected event in the workplace
- Using critical thinking skills
- Dealing with tech issues
- Attempting to come up with better processes and procedures on the job
- Resolving situations on your own





# PLANNING & ORGANIZING

To arrange into a structured whole; order, or to coordinate or make arrangements & preparations for an event or activity.

## EXAMPLE

You have to organize an “end of season” sale that will be held on a particular date. In order to have all of the merchandise ready and available for that date, you need to plan sorting, categorizing, labelling, signage, and advertising well in advance.

### KEY SKILLS



**Time management**



**Recognizing priorities**



**Goal setting**

### WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Responding to requests
- Completing numerous tasks on a daily basis
- Dealing with multiple clients or customers at once
- Knowing what is and is not a priority
- Typing documents
- Navigating websites
- Operating databases

*“ By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. ” - Benjamin Franklin*

### HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- ✓ Developing a scheduling system that works for you
- ✓ Making sure that you are aware of all deadlines and tasks to be completed at all times
- ✓ Keeping lists of tasks and deadlines handy & scheduling accordingly
- ✓ Communicating with co-workers and employers in order to make sure you are aware of all upcoming tasks and deadlines
- ✓ Being aware of what you can and can not accomplish, without becoming overwhelmed
- ✓ Using a calendar to ensure important dates are not missed





# CRITICAL THINKING

The objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment. The ability to remove all emotion from an issue and observe the facts objectively to make a logical decision.

## EXAMPLE

You have to review a budget for your firm and determine how to save money by finding efficiencies. Thinking critically will allow you to provide a thorough analysis of the budget items and make logical decisions that will affect the overall bottom line of your firm.

## KEY SKILLS



Identifying potential issues & not taking things personally



Making use of all available information



Thinking systematically before implementing a plan

## WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Facing problems at work
- Working out a difficult task
- Taking initiative to solve problems with less guidance
- Trying to always see the bigger picture

*"Critical thinking is thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better." - Richard W. Paul*

## HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- ✓ Taking initiative to solve problems
- ✓ Going above & beyond what is required & not just doing the bare minimum
- ✓ Developing contingency plans
- ✓ Proving your value as a worker by identifying problems and suggesting well thought out solutions to them
- ✓ Deciding the best way to carry out tasks
- ✓ Implementing a new process or procedure at work
- ✓ Dealing with tech issues





# DECISION MAKING

The process of finding solutions to difficult or complex issues and making a firm determination.

## EXAMPLE

As a hiring manager, it will be up to you to decide on which candidate receives employment from a list of potentials. To do so, you must weigh the strengths and weaknesses of the people being interviewed and decide who will best suit the position.

## KEY SKILLS



**Identifying potential issues**



**Critical thinking & Analysis**



**Stress management**

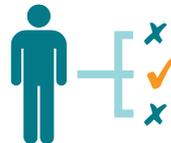
## WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- In the event that anything unexpected occurs
- Planning out the day's tasks
- Taking initiative and working independently
- Having a team of staff to manage or oversee

*" Indecision becomes decision with time. "*

## HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- ✓ Dealing with a new situation or new procedures
- ✓ Dealing with a difficult customer/ co-worker
- ✓ Prioritizing tasks to be completed
- ✓ Contingency planning in the event that something unplanned happens and decisions must be quickly made
- ✓ Realizing that there are consequences & rewards for all decisions





# MEMORY

The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information from the past; a recollection.

## EXAMPLE

This can consist of simply remembering the order of a frequent patron when working in a food service environment. By knowing what they order regularly, you will endear yourself to the customer and enrich their experience in your place of employment.

## KEY SKILLS



Ability to learn



Ability to retain information



Ability to recognize when to and how to recall information

## WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Whenever you are learning a new skill that needs retention
- Recalling customer or client instructions
- Learning from past mistakes to influence future decisions

*" If you wish to forget anything on the spot, make a note that this thing is to be remembered." - Edgar Allan Poe*

## HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- While in training to learn the job expectations
- When implementing processes and procedures
- When providing information about a past event
- When providing information about event statistics, or pertinent recollections of important events on the job
- Recognizing regular customers and knowing best how to serve them



# 1 2 3

## NUMERACY

The ability to understand and work with numbers.

### EXAMPLE

You need to make change for a customer and you do not have a cash register or a calculator. You will need to know how to count back the correct change, or the customer could feel taken advantage of, which would ultimately hurt the reputation of the shop.

### KEY SKILLS



Ability to do basic mental math



Money Management



Ability to tell time

### WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Counting cash
- Taking basic measurements
- Calculating orders
- Checking receipts & invoices
- Bookkeeping

*“ Do you know what seems odd to me? Numbers that aren’t divisible by two. ”*

### HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- Interpreting graphs
- Budgeting
- Taking measurements
- Returning change or counting money
- Reading the clock and developing timelines
- Creating spreadsheets and documenting statistics





# DEPENDABILITY & RELIABILITY

The ability to be relied on or depended on, as for accuracy, honesty, or achievement.

## EXAMPLE

If someone has an emergency and needs a few days off, offering to take their shifts to help out subsequently working those shifts proves that you are dependable and reliable.

### KEY SKILLS



Ability to recognize needs of the organization



Positive & trust-worthy attitude



Self-motivation

### WHEN YOU WILL NEED TO USE THIS SKILL

- Working on an important and time sensitive task
- Offering to work because someone else is unable to cover a shift
- Completing the probation period when you are first hired to prove yourself
- Building rapport with colleagues and employers

*" No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible. " - Voltaire*

### HOW TO USE THIS SKILL IN THE WORKPLACE:

- Realizing that your actions affect others in your workplace
- Coming to work on time and prepared for your shift
- Being aware of deadlines in order to ensure that your work is submitted in a timely manner
- Agreeing to call-in shifts
- Taking on any and all tasks with the same amount of dedication and care
- Making sure to come into work for every scheduled shift and working to the best of your ability
- Taking responsibility for your own mistakes and errors





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### YES EMPLOYMENT

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705-476-3234  
info@yesnorthbay.com  
www.yesnorthbay.com

### EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS (COLLÈGE BORÉAL)

186 Main Street  
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705-753-9844  
www.collegeboreal.ca  
/employment-services

### DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES CENTRE

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www.eastparrysoundliteracycouncil.org

For more job seeker resources, please visit:

[www.thelabourmarketgroup.ca](http://www.thelabourmarketgroup.ca)



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