

## Skills for Success Curriculum Resource Cover Page

### Organization

College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (CSC)

### Curriculum Resource

***Adaptability: Reacting to Change and Developing a Can-Do Attitude***

This resource will provide learners with tools and tips on how to develop adaptability skills in the workplace and how to develop a can-do attitude.

### OALCF Alignment

Competency	Task Group	Level
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A1. Read continuous text	2
Competency F - Engage with Others	N/A	3

### Goal Paths (check all that apply)

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|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment     | <input type="checkbox"/> Postsecondary |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship | <input type="checkbox"/> Independence  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School Credit   |  |

### Embedded Skills for Success (check all that apply)

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|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptability   | <input type="checkbox"/> Numeracy           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration  | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity and innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital                   |   |

**Notes:**

The opinions expressed in this document are the opinions of the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading. The Government of Ontario and its agencies are in no way bound by any recommendations contained in this document.

# Adaptability: Reacting to Change and Developing a “Can-Do Attitude”



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“Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.” – Charles R. Swindoll

Are you looking to become more successful and sought after in the workforce?

Employers want to hire people who can adapt to change and have a can-do attitude.

## Learning in this resource:

- ✓ Define adaptability in the workplace and its importance.
- ✓ Understand why change happens.
- ✓ List adaptability traits.
- ✓ Access tools to become more adaptable in the workplace.
- ✓ Define a can-do attitude and how it relates to adaptability.
- ✓ Access tips on developing a can-do attitude.

Let's get started!

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## Section A: Defining adaptability and its importance.

### What is adaptability in the workplace?

Adaptability, one of the many soft skills needed for employability, is *“being willing and able to modify one’s way of thinking and behaving when faced with new or changing information, situations, or environments”*. (Canada Revenue Agency Competencies. 2016).

People who are adaptable will have the flexibility “to change with changing industries, react to feedback from their boss, and work well in teams“(Drew, C. 2021).

To summarize, **adaptability skills are needed when change occurs.**

### Reflection:

We have all had to deal with changes in our lives. How we deal with the change is an indication of how adaptable we are.

How have you handled change in the past in the workplace or your personal life?

Below are scenarios that require a person to adapt to a change in their life, at work, or personally. Choose one of the scenarios that resembles one you have dealt with in the past. Describe your situation and share how you dealt with it.



your chosen scenario:

Cooking dinner for a family gathering and the power goes out.	A bad habit you have decided to quit.
Getting a new boss or manager at work.	Your boss asks you to put aside a task or project you are concentrating on so that you can start a new one.
The company you work for has introduced new software that will replace the current one you have been working with for a long time.	A friend or family member announces that they are moving far away.

Describe the scenario and how you dealt with it: (Use the next page for more space.)

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Take your reflection a step further:

Did you handle the situation well? If so, explain the flexible and positive ways the situation was handled. If you think you could have handled the situation better, explain how you could have been more flexible and positive.

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**Why is adaptability so important in the workplace?**

Changes occur daily in the workplace. They may be minor, such as having a meeting rescheduled, or being asked to follow a new procedure, or major, such as getting a new boss or having new tasks added to your job requiring you to completely change your routine.

It is important to have highly developed adaptability skills **because employers look for candidates who will become assets to the organization** they work for, and who will:

- ✓ Enable the organization to grow and be more successful.
- ✓ Create a pleasant work environment.
- ✓ Work with the organization to overcome challenges it may face.
- ✓ Adjust priorities, schedules, tasks to respond to changing circumstances.
- ✓ Apply different approaches and tactics to different situations and react appropriately.
- ✓ Support new systems and procedures put in place to optimize efficiency.

## Section B: Why change occurs in the workplace.



### Reflection:

Think about a time you decided to change something in your personal life, or at work. Why did you want this change? Share your reflection here and include what the change was and why you wanted it:

Chances are you wanted this change to occur to improve something or a situation, to make it better, more positive, more efficient, nicer, etc.

People, like organizations, do not implement change to make something worse. They change something hoping to improve on it.

Change is key to growth and success.

For improvements to occur, change must occur.

For the most part, when change occurs within an organization, its objective is one of growth; it is to better the organization on one or many levels.

Here are a few examples of reasons why change happens in the workplace:

- Merger/acquisition
- Expanding operations
- Adding a new product/service
- Digital innovation
- Adjusting to economic and consumer changes
- Reducing costs
- Improving customer service
- Adapting to a remote workforce

(Airiodion, O. Crolley F., 2019)

Though employees may not understand, agree or like changes in their workplace, it is important for them to adapt to those changes when they occur.

## Section C: Traits of an adaptable person

Are you an adaptable person?

























Here is a list of traits that make people adaptable:


- They're flexible.
- They're calm under pressure.
- They think quickly.
- They think several steps ahead.
- They assess situations and identify threats.
- They are ongoing lifelong learners.
- They are curious.
- They see opportunity above obstacles.
- They are a team player and collaborator.
- They are emotionally intelligent.
- They practise positivity.

(Adapted from Drew, C. 2021).

Which of these traits do you possess? Which do you feel you could improve on?

In the table below, beside each trait, circle the smiling face 😊 if you possess the trait or the doubtful face 😬 if you need to improve that trait.

Adaptability Traits	 or 
Flexible	 
Calm under pressure	 
Quick thinker	 
Thinks several steps ahead	 
Assesses situations and identifies threats	 
Lifelong learner	 
Curious	 
Sees opportunities over obstacles	 
Emotionally intelligent	 
Positive attitude	 
Team player and collaborator	 

It's completely fine if you don't have a perfect  score! No one is perfect!

**Here are some tips that may help you further develop some of the above traits.**

1. Be understanding of unexpected changes in other colleagues' or your employer's routine that may affect your own and work with them to meet everyone's needs.
2. Don't assume the worst in an unexpected situation or change; instead, ask yourself, your employer, and your colleagues questions to help you assess the situation.
3. See the positive in the change and keep an open mind. Consciously replace negative thoughts by positive ones and remember that change is inevitable; this way, you will always be ready when change happens.

4. See the change as an opportunity for growth.
5. Do not let other people's opinions or your own, or past bad experiences affect your judgement. Use your own judgement and move forward; past experiences do not belong in present or future experiences.
6. Take baby steps. It takes time to adjust to a change.
7. When something unexpected happens, stay calm and don't panic. Take deep breaths; take a moment for yourself (step out of the office, go for a walk, do something that will calm you). This will help you think more clearly and positively.



**Reflection:**

Learning a new skill takes time!

Which trait do you want to work on? How will you do that?

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## Section D: Defining a Can-do Attitude:

Adaptability and a can-do attitude go hand in hand. Although both require a positive mindset, a can-do attitude takes positivity one step further:



***A person with a can-do attitude believes that anything is possible.***

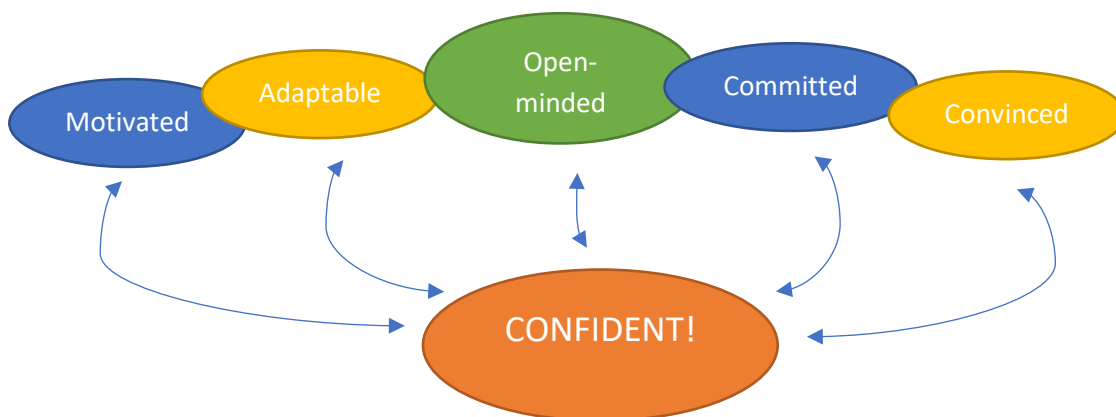
Let's take it a step further:

***It is believing that anything can be done and being willing to do the necessary work to get it done.***

A can-do attitude is a way of thinking. As such, it is usually embedded into our mind. "Different factors might contribute to us either being can-doers or doubters, from our temperaments, upbringing, to various experiences we have had throughout our life" (Puac Jovanovic, 2015-2023).

Though you may not possess a can-do attitude, it is possible to change your mindset.

**Can-doers are:**



## Section E: Tips to Help you Develop a Can-do Attitude

Are you ready to learn how you can develop a can-do attitude?

Below are 5 tips on ways that you can develop a can-do attitude.

### 1. Develop a Growth Mentality (also known as a growth mindset)

What's a growth mentality? Simply put, it is believing that through hard work and conviction, one can change, improve, or develop a new ability, even one they have difficulty with.

#### Reflection:

Recall a skill you have developed. It could be anything from riding a bike, to baking a cake. How did you develop this ability?

Developed skill:

How you developed it:

If you indicated that your skill was developed through practice, persistence, trying different methods, then you are on your way to understanding growth mindset.

Here are some tips on how you can further develop your growth mentality:

- ✓ Study
- ✓ Read
- ✓ Practice
- ✓ Try, try and try again.
- ✓ Believe in your ability to do something.
- ✓ Encourage yourself.
- ✓ Eliminate any negative thoughts you may have about yourself and replace it with positive ones.

## 2. “Accept that you will make mistakes, and learn from them

Let’s face it; you make mistakes. We all do. Many of them. You must learn to tell yourself that it’s ok.

Are you in the habit of dwelling over a mistake? Going over it in your head? Letting it eat you up? Ask yourself: Has doing this ever changed the outcome of your error? Probably not.

Do you tend to blame others for your mistake? Again, ask yourself: did it make it better?

No, it did not. The mistake was still there.

What do can-doers do when they make a mistake? **They deal with it.** They own it. They learn from it, and most important: they forgive themselves for it and move on.

The next time you make a mistake, do the following:  
Assess it. Ask yourself what happened. What could or should have been done? Is it repairable? If so, repair it, and own it. If not, forgive yourself for it, retain the lesson learned from it, and proceed with your day.

## 3. Get out of your comfort zone and seize opportunities as they arise.

Often, we prevent ourselves from trying something new because we fear the unknown and we fear failure. We question ourselves: What if I fail? What if I don’t like it? What will others think? What will happen if I take the chance? Is it too risky?

**As Tom Selleck (a famous actor) once said:  
Risk is the price you pay for opportunity.**

Start recognizing opportunities. When one arises, entertain the idea of moving forward with it. Question yourself: What good can come of it? Will it help me grow professionally? Personally? What are the risks involved? Are they minimal or elevated?

Get curious! What is you are not sure what an opportunity looks like? Here are a few examples:

Invitations to:

- A meeting
- An event be it social or work related (Network, network network!)
- A dinner or lunch
- A conference

Being asked to be part of:

- A project
- A board
- An organization or club
- A mentorship program.

Furthering your education by taking:

- Workshops
- Courses
- A degree, diploma, or certificate

Taking on new:

- Assignments
- Projects
- Roles

There are even opportunities when something seemingly negative happens to you such as being demoted, laid off or fired as it becomes the perfect opportunity to test your skills elsewhere, to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses and to pursue a new job or career.

**To summarize:** When a door opens, peek your head in, and see if it is worth going through it, even if it scares you.

And remember, when one door closes, another one will open. You must keep an open mind!

#### **4. Be proactive and avoid procrastinating.**

Can-doers will attack a new idea, project, task, chore, immediately because they know that in doing so, they are opening the door to more opportunities by freeing up future time.

#### **Food for thought:**

Have you ever had to decline doing something you would have really liked to do because you had to finish or even start something that could and perhaps should have been done a long time ago? If so, that was a missed opportunity brought on by procrastination.

## How to break the cycle of procrastination:

- I. Realize there is no perfect time to do something.

Often, we put off doing something because it does not seem like the right time. We find excuses.



**HEADLINE!** There is no perfect time! The time is now!

The next time you catch yourself using the “it’s not the right time excuse”, stop yourself and affirm: There is never a right time, so I should and will do it now. Then, proceed into action.

- II. Adopt a sense of urgency in all you do. Eliminate thoughts of doing something: later, tomorrow, in a few minutes or sometime in the future.

There are many benefits of completing something sooner rather than later:

- ✓ Feeling a sense of accomplishment
- ✓ Time is freed up to do something else.
- ✓ Weight is lifted off your shoulders.
- ✓ Feeling a sense of pride

## 5. Align your thoughts with your feelings and your actions.

It’s one thing to “think positively”. We have all heard that saying. However, you must also feel positive and act positive.

**Positive thoughts** → **Positive feelings** → **Positive actions**

All three go hand in hand

The perfect example of aligning your thoughts with your feelings and your actions is when you are cheering for your favorite athlete, sport’s team, band, loved one in a competition, etc.

You want them to succeed therefore, in your MIND, you tell yourself they will win, they will succeed. At the same time, you FEEL happy, excited, confident and that all reflects in how you ACT: you are smiling, laughing, cheering, and gesturing confidently.



This is the same mindset, attitude, and behavior, you should exercise in your life EVERY DAY!

Can-doers will face all situations this way, even in adversity, because they know that in doing so, they will come out on top, and if not, as we have already mentioned, they know

How can you learn to positively align your thoughts, feelings and actions?

**There are 3 points to remember when trying to align feelings, thoughts and actions.**

1. **Your feelings will impact your thoughts.** If you feel happy, your thoughts will be positive. When you feel sad, frustrated, angry, your thoughts are negative.

**Reflection:** Think of 2 different occasions when you were stuck waiting somewhere for a long period of time (it could be that you were stuck in a traffic jam, or in a line up at a store, or in a doctor's office).

On the first occasion, you were in a good mood. What thoughts related to the wait were going through your mind?

Did they resemble the following?

- ✓ It's ok. I'm not in a rush. 😊
- ✓ I'll just listen to some music while I wait. 😊
- ✓ I can chat with the person in front/back/next to me. 😊
- ✓ I can catch up on some emails or text messages. 😊
- ✓ I hope this delay is not due to someone having trouble. 😊

In the second occasion, you were in a bad mood (it happens to all of us 😞). Again, what thoughts related to the wait were going through your mind?

Did they resemble the following?

- ✓ What's this hold up?! 😞
- ✓ I don't have time for this! 😞
- ✓ Don't people know how to drive/ count money / book appointments?! 😞
- ✓ My time is being wasted! 😞

Can you see the pattern and how your thoughts affect your thinking?

2. **Your thoughts impact your actions.** When you think positively, it is reflected in your actions. You stand tall, look people in the eyes, smile and interact positively with those around you.

Again, using the same two scenarios you reflected on above, think about your actions and demeanor while you waited:

When you were stuck but in a good mood, did you:

- ✓ Keep smiling?
- ✓ Acknowledge and talk pleasantly with those around you?
- ✓ Let someone cut in front of you be it in a vehicle or in a line?
- ✓ Keep your head up?

And stuck in a bad mood, what are the chances that you:

- ✓ Used colorful language (in your thoughts or out loud)?
- ✓ Grunted or sighed exasperatingly?
- ✓ Frowned and shook your head angrily?
- ✓ Kept your head low and ignore the people around you?

It is important to make a conscious effort of shifting negative thoughts to positive ones in what you may perceive and a "bad situation".

**By shifting your thoughts, your actions will follow suit.**

For example, a new procedure is to be implemented at work. Your first thoughts are “Not another useless procedure” and you shake your head and sigh (which is a natural reaction to a negative thought). However, because you are working on becoming a can-doer, you quickly change your thoughts to something like: “ok, it won’t hurt to give it a try”. Your natural actions associated to this thought: a deep breath and a nod.

Your actions will often mirror your thoughts if you do not make a conscious effort to disassociate both.

### **3. Your actions will impact how you feel.**

Picture a different scenario: Think of a time you did something good or nice for another person, despite not feeling good about yourself, or being in a bad mood. It could be something such as opening a door for someone, picking up something that fell from someone’s bag, giving your seat to a stranger on a bus, etc. Despite not being in the best of moods, your positive gesture most likely lightened your mood (even if you didn’t acknowledge it at that time). There was a shift in how you felt, even if for only a moment.

Can-doers make a conscious effort to shift their moods, actions, or thoughts from negative to positive. This gives them the ability to move forward and remain open to opportunities. The more you realize the impact that each factor has on the other, the easier it will be to shift them.

When all is positively aligned, it is easier to

- Tackle challenges
- See opportunities as they emerge.
- Deal with people you may find unpleasant.
- Remain open-minded.



**This exercise to help you positively align your thoughts with your feelings and actions:**

Identify a situation in your life that you currently and typically think negatively about (work-related or personal). For example: a particular daily task at work you don't like doing; your commute to work; a chore you need to do at home, etc.

Negative situation:

EXAMPLE: I dislike that the bus drops me off so far away from my workplace.
Your turn:

What are your current thoughts, feelings, and actions/behaviors regarding this situation?

Thoughts	Feelings	Actions/behaviors
EX: Negative thought: It is so frustrating that the bus driver doesn't want to drop us off at the entrance of the building!	Anger and resentment	I don't thank the driver on my way out, I may scowl at them. I look down and avoid other people getting off at the same stop.
Your turn:		

Now, make a conscious effort to find positive ways of thinking, feeling and acting about this situation. Then, apply it in reality!

Positive Thoughts	Positive Feelings	Positive Actions/behaviors
EX: Positive thought: This short walk lets me get fresh air and a little exercise and I get to talk with other students as we walk.	Appreciative and glad	I thank my bus driver and smile at them, and I engage in conversation with other people in the same situation.
Your turn:		

It may be difficult to do at first, because **bad habits are hard to break**, but work on it every day. It will get easier. Then notice the shift in your surroundings when you see the situation in a more positive light.

Repeat this process with other situations that you currently perceive as negative.

**GOOD LUCK in your journey to be more adaptable and to develop a can-do attitude!  
Stay flexible, positive, and determined.**



## Summary:

- ✓ Adaptability is being able and open to modifying your way of thinking and behaving when change occurs.
- ✓ Adaptability skills are important because employers look for candidates who will become assets to the organization they work for and who will help them grow.
- ✓ Change is key to growth and success and is implemented for improvement purposes.
- ✓ Traits of an adaptable person include, but are not limited to being:
  - Flexible
  - Calm under pressure.
  - Quick thinkers
  - Proactive thinkers
  - Able to assess situations and identify threats.
  - Lifelong learners
  - Curious
  - Open to opportunities
  - A team player and collaborator
  - Emotionally intelligent
  - Positive
- ✓ Tips to help develop adaptability traits include:
  - Being understanding and flexible toward unexpected changes in colleagues' or your employer's routine.
  - Not jumping to conclusions and asking questions when faced with change.
  - See the positive in the change and keep an open mind.
  - See change as an opportunity for growth.
  - Forming your own opinions instead of adopting those of others in the wake of change.
  - Taking baby steps.
  - Practising calming and destressing techniques when faced with unexpected change.
- ✓ A person with a can-do attitude believes that anything can be done and is willing to do the necessary to get it done.
- ✓ Can-doers traits include being motivated, adaptable, open-minded, committed, convinced, and confident.
- ✓ Tips on developing a can-do attitude include:
  - Develop a growth mindset
  - Accept and learn from your mistakes
  - Get out of your comfort zone; recognize and seize opportunities
  - Be proactive and avoid procrastination
  - Align your thoughts with your feelings and actions

## References

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