

## CURRICULUM RESOURCE

Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How: Adaptability in the Workplace

## OALCF ALIGNMENT

Competency	Task Group	Level
Competency A - Find and Use Information	A1. Read continuous text	2
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A2. Interpret documents	2
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A4	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B3. Complete and create documents	2
Competency D - Use Digital Technology	N/A	1

## Goal Paths (check all that apply)

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

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

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

**NOTES:** Part two of an eleven-part series on workplace norms for employed learners.

**[Practitioners may wish to read some examples aloud.]**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This Employment Ontario service is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario through the Canada-Ontario Job Fund Agreement.

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## WORKPLACE SKILLS, STRATEGIES, AND KNOW-HOW

### Note for practitioners:

This series of **Skills for Success Curriculum Resources** is a beginner's guide to the modern workplace for LBS learners. The goal is to provide essential tools to employed learners, or learners seeking employment, so that they can thrive as employees. This series considers personal development topics ranging from conflict resolution to time management; topics focused on changes in the workplace; and mental health issues like stress management.

The overall focus of the series is on helping employees (or aspiring employees) understand their rights and responsibilities.

These resources are learner-based and activity-focused, with each topic area serving as a mini-lesson, followed by personalized activities. The activities invite learners to respond to lesson material or explore their own ideas on the subject.

The series is divided into eleven sections that can be used separately or in tandem:

- Your Rights in the Workplace
- Adaptability in the Workplace
- Collaboration in the Workplace
- Communication in the Workplace
- Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace
- Problem Solving in the Workplace
- Work-Related Stress
- Time-management
- Conflict Resolution
- Self-Advocacy
- Changes in the Workplace

# WORKPLACE SKILLS, STRATEGIES, AND KNOW-HOW: ADAPTABILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

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*This is Section Two, Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How:  
Adaptability in the Workplace*

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## Overview

Are you currently employed? Are you about to start a new job? There are many things about the modern workplace that you may not know.

This resource series is designed to help you get the most out of your employment. When you have a job, there are several important questions you should ask:

- What are my rights?
- How can I advocate for myself?
- How should I expect to be treated on the job?
- What are the expectations at a modern workplace?
- What has changed at workplaces over the last few years?
- How can I be my best at:
  - conflict resolution
  - time-management
  - communication

You may also face other challenges on the job. Do you have concerns about:

- stress on the job
- mental health at your workplace

This resource series will consider these topics and more. Participate in the lessons and activities, and you will learn to get the most out of the modern workplace.



## Introduction

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**Adaptability** means: being able to adjust to new conditions.

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### What is adaptability?

Change is something you must deal with at work. As an employee, it's helpful to learn ways to **adapt** to workplace changes. Adaptability is important in other aspects of life too. It might mean something small like:

- learning to use a new appliance when an old one breaks
- learning new bus routes when the old ones change
- going to a new grocery store when the old one closes

It might mean something bigger like:

- saying goodbye to a friend who is moving away
- switching careers
- moving to a new city or country

This resource will discuss adaptability in the workplace. It will teach you how to improve your adaptability skills.



1. What changes have you had to adjust to in your life?

Check the boxes that apply to you:

- ☐ I find change difficult or stressful.
- ☐ I like to have a routine and stick to it.
- ☐ I am a flexible person.
- ☐ I find new opportunities exciting.



## Adaptability Can Be Hard!

Adapting to change can be hard because change is hard. We get used to things being a certain way. There is comfort in familiar routines and patterns.

When those familiar things change, it is **uncomfortable**.



### New Task!

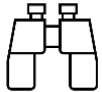
What does adaptability **feel** like? Try these tasks. Then discuss how they made you feel.

1. Scratch your ear with your thumb or pinkie finger, instead of your pointer finger.
2. Walk backwards across the room. (Be careful!)
3. What time do you normally go to bed? Imagine going to bed much earlier or later.
4. Where do you walk to the most? Imagine using a different route to get there.

Write down or discuss the challenges of doing this.

## Resisting Change

Change makes us uncomfortable. So it is natural to resist it. But that's not always the best response. Sometimes resisting change makes things worse.



Let's look at an example.

K has been working at an Amazon warehouse for six months. K was trained to do many different roles at work. But from the beginning K has only been responsible for recording inventory in the computer.

One day K's manager says that a co-worker has quit. They need K to take on some new roles. K has to:

- load and unload delivery trucks
- organize shelves around the warehouse
- report damage to any inventory

The change makes K uncomfortable and upset. K is not looking forward to doing more physical work. K doesn't want to have to do this type of work again. So K decides to do a bad job.

K makes mistakes on purpose. K drops boxes and loses boxes. Some inventory is damaged.

**Reflect!**

Write or discuss with your teacher or group.

1. Why do you think K chose to do a bad job? Was this the right choice?
2. What do you think K's manager might feel about K's mistakes?
3. How could K have handled the situation better?

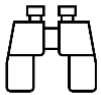
## Benefits

### Benefits of Adaptability

If you learn to be adaptable, you will manage change much better. You will be more likely to succeed at work and in life. There are many benefits to adaptability at work.

Employees who learn to be adaptable:

- succeed even when the work changes
- learn to work with almost anyone
- embrace new tasks
- take on new roles
- are always learning new things



Let's look at an example.

J has worked as a cashier at Walmart for three years. One day the manager says that the store is getting new cash registers. All the cashiers will have to learn to use the new cash registers. J is used to the old machines and nervous to use the new machines. J feels upset and uncomfortable because of the change.

J uses the new machines for a week. J finds the new machines are tricky in some ways. The buttons are in different places. The screen is laid out differently. But J tries to be open-minded and flexible. J stays patient and is willing to learn.

Soon, J gets used to the layout of the buttons and screens. The new screens are easier to read. And J finds that the new cash registers work faster. Customers are very pleased with J's speed checking them out. J's manager is pleased too.



### Reflect!

Thinking about adaptability. Fill out the chart below.

What were some things J was <b>concerned</b> about?	What were some adaptability <b>skills</b> J used?	What were some <b>benefits</b> of J being adaptable?

Have you ever benefitted from adapting to change at work or in life? Write some examples below or discuss with your teacher or group.

## Skills

Getting better at adaptability requires certain skills. Each one helps overcome the resistance to change. The main skills are:

- being open-minded or open to new ideas
- being flexible or open to change
- being interested in trying new things
- being willing to learn
- being patient



### New Task!

How many adaptability skills do you have? Put a check in the box that applies to you.

Adaptability Skills	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
I am open to new ideas			
I embrace new tasks or roles			
I am willing to learn new things			
I like to be challenged			
I can learn to work with most people			
I am patient			

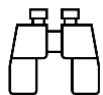
## Strategies To Try

### 1. Accept the Change

Until you accept change, you can't adapt to it. You may have negative thoughts. You may focus on what you are losing. You may worry about going from something familiar to something unfamiliar.

But there may also be positives to the change. We don't see these positives, if we focus on the negatives.

- Try to **change your focus** and look for positives.
- Try to reframe the change as an **opportunity**.



Let's look at an example.

P works in shipping and receiving at a Tim Horton's warehouse. One of P's main roles has been to unload boxes of coffee from the trucks. The boxes used to weigh 9 kg. P was able to work quickly, unloading one box at a time.

But the company has changed the size of their boxes of coffee. They now weigh 20 kg. P knows that lifting the heavier boxes increases risk of injury.

P does not like working slower. P prefers working alone. But P knows that carrying the boxes with a co-worker will reduce risk of injury. P adapts to the situation and decides to lift the heavier boxes with a co-worker.

They avoid injury. And P's co-worker also teaches P some safe-lifting tips!



1. What were P's reasons for adapting?

2. How did P change their focus in order to adapt?

### 3. What were the benefits of P adapting?

## 2. Think About Your Feelings

One of the best ways to adapt to change is to try to understand your feelings. Change can be very confusing. There may be exciting aspects to the change. There may be scary aspects.

To be clear on what you're feeling, you need to reflect:

- Take time to sit with your thoughts.
- Make lists like a pros and cons list.
- Talk through your feelings with loved ones or trusted friends.
- Write down reflections about your feelings.



### New Task!

Do this reflection exercise after work or on the weekends.

1. Dedicate a notebook to recording your feelings about the changes in your life or at work.
2. Try to write down what you are feeling as often as you can. Record your thoughts about the workplace changes. Record your worries and fears. Record your hopes.
3. Keep the journal private. This is only for you. That way, you can be honest about what you feel.
4. Continue to record your thoughts and feelings for a month or more. Check back on how your feelings have changed by re-reading the journal.

### 3. Patience and Perseverance

Adapting to change doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and **patience**. You need to give yourself the chance to adjust. You need to get used to the new way things are.

Are you dealing with the discomfort and upset that comes from change?

- Remember that things heal with time.

Are you dealing with new responsibilities or roles at work?

- Remember that things get easier with practice.

**Perseverance** means not giving up. With patience and effort, perseverance leads to **resilience**. Resilience is a special kind of strength. Watch the video below to learn more about resilience.



Video url: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nG5aDDSVrZM>

**Reflect!**

What is resilience?

1. Read the list of qualities below. Check the ones you think lead to resilience.

- ☐ flexibility
- ☐ perseverance
- ☐ hard work
- ☐ willingness to learn
- ☐ willingness to practice
- ☐ open mind
- ☐ patience

2. Which of these qualities do you have? Write your answer or discuss with your teacher or group.

3. Which of these qualities do you think is most important for resilience? Write your answer or discuss with your teacher or group.

## Review

To review, there are three strategies you can try to strengthen your adaptability skills:

- Accept the change
- Reflect on your feelings
- Patience and Perseverance

Together, these skills help you build **resilience**.



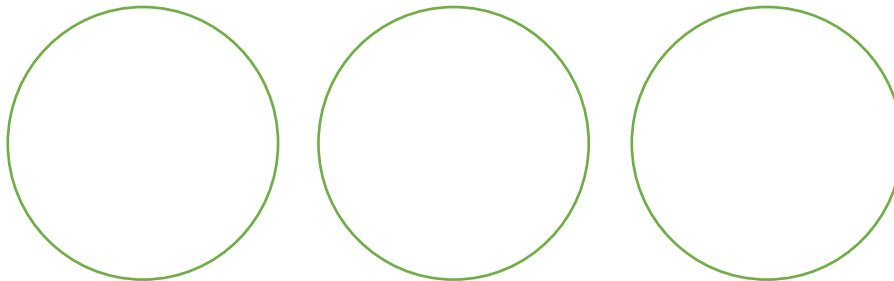
### New Task!

Let's put these strategies to the test.

1. In this task you will be asked to draw pictures inside some circles.
2. You can draw anything you want in the circles. Look at the examples below for ideas.

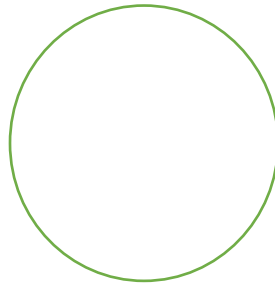


3. Let's start! Draw whatever you like in the circles below.

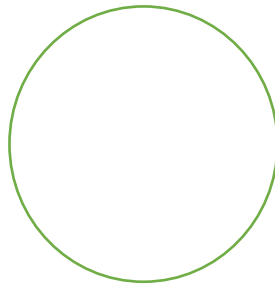


4. Now you will draw in the next circles. But this time you **can't use your hands!**  
Use your mouth, your armpit, your feet, or whatever.

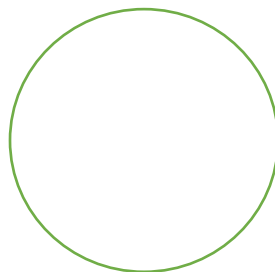
5. Draw in the first circle. How did it feel?



6. Now try to accept that you can't use your hands. Draw in the second circle. How did it feel?



7. Keep at it! Be patient and persevere! Draw in the third circle. How did it feel?



## Final Thoughts

**Not all change is good. Be true to yourself.**

The truth is that some change is bad. Sometimes things do get worse. Sometimes there is no easy fix.

If this feels like the case to you, it's important to practice self-care. Be gentle with yourself and use self-care to get through the worst of it. Some self-care steps you can take include:

- Practice reflection and journalling.
- Try to eat healthier and exercise.
- Be grateful for the good things in your life and write them down.
- Spend time with loved ones and friends.
- Try to be resilient but also be forgiving of yourself.



- **Self-care** will help you cope with change. But don't hesitate to seek help. There are professional help contacts at the end of this resource.

## Resources

Are you feeling stressed at work? Is it getting worse? Don't hesitate to seek help.

There are many resources available to help you. Some are listed below:

- The Canadian Mental Health Association. Tips and resources for dealing with stress: <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/understanding-and-finding-help-for-stress/>
- Support for when you are in crisis at Talk Suicide:
  - Call anytime: **1-833-456-4566**
  - Text between 4pm and midnight ET: **45645**
- eMentalHealth.ca offers a listing of local mental health resources: <https://www.ementalhealth.ca/Ontario/Stress/index.php?m=heading&ID=118>
- ConnexOntario offers free mental health support 24/7 by phone or chat: <https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/>
- 211 Ontario offers free mental health services:
  - Call **211** or toll free at **1-877-330-3213**
- Distress and Crisis Ontario offers crisis centres in many communities: <https://www.dcontario.org/>
  - Also see the other resources in this series: **Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How**