

**CURRICULUM RESOURCE**

Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How: Your Rights 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 B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B1. Interact with others	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B3. Complete and create documents	1
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 type="checkbox"/> Independence  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School Credit   |  |

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

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

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

## 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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Ontario



The opinions expressed in this report are the opinions of Community Literacy of Ontario and do not necessarily reflect those of our funders.

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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: YOUR RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE

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*This is Section One, Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How:  
Your Rights 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

When you enter the workforce, you have the right to expect proper treatment. There are norms that employees and employers should understand and follow. It's important to know what employers will expect of you. It's important to know **your** responsibilities.

It's also important to learn what you should expect from your managers and co-workers. Understanding and agreeing on expectations is one way to ensure a strong working environment. Some of the foundations of proper treatment at the workplace include:

- respect between co-workers and managers
- a workplace that is free from harassment and bullying
- fair pay and fairness in how tasks and responsibilities are assigned
- the right to have your thoughts and concerns heard
- a safe, secure, and supportive workplace
- reasonable efforts and results from all co-workers and managers

This resource will discuss how you should expect to be treated at work. It will teach you how to meet your responsibilities and advocate for proper workplace standards.



**Let's discuss!** Soon we will learn more about treatment in the workplace.

First let's talk about **your** situation. Check the boxes that apply to you:

- ☐ I sometimes do more than my share of the work.
- ☐ I don't like to complain even if I see problems at work.
- ☐ I am not very good at advocating for myself.
- ☐ I speak up when I have concerns or problems at work.



Are you in a different situation? Discuss with your teacher or partner.



### Your Goals!

It's time to think about your **goals**:

1. Are you currently looking for work? Yes ☐ No ☐
2. If so, what sort of work interests you? Discuss with your teacher and partner.
3. How do you think it might help you **to know employee and employer responsibilities at work?**



### New Task!

Do this now or when you have more time:

- Make a list of five jobs that interest you.
- Now re-write the list.
- Put the job you'd like most at the top.
- Then put the job you'd like second-most. And so on.
- Do any of these jobs involve customer service or large staffs?
  - Jobs like this involve more interpersonal relationships. At these jobs, it's especially important to know how you should be treated at work. It's also important to know how you should treat others.

## Expectations and Responsibilities

### Know Your Worth

It can be tricky to understand what you should expect from co-workers and managers at work. Start by believing in yourself and your worth. No one has the right to walk all over you. The most important things you should expect from co-workers and managers are:

- respectful treatment
- fairness in terms of tasks and duties
- to be listened to
- support, guidance, and understanding
- recognition for your work

### Know Your Rights

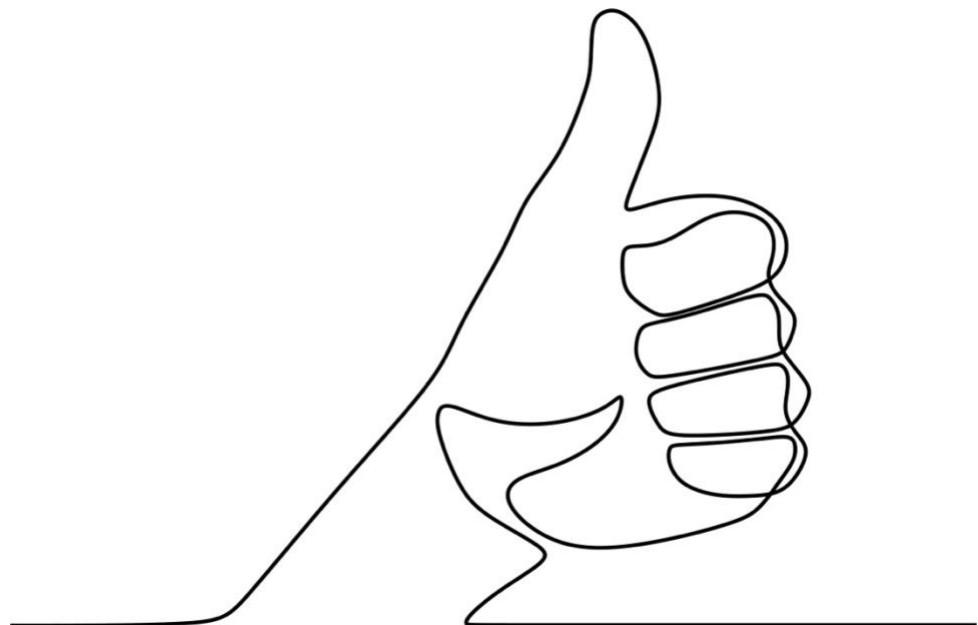
Many national and provincial laws exist to protect you at work. Employers will be required to follow these laws and industry standards. Some of your workplace rights include:

- fairness in terms of pay
- freedom from harassment and bullying
- a safe and secure working environment

## Know Your Responsibilities

You are also part of the workplace community. You are a part of making your company a success. You are part of building a good workplace environment. Here are some important responsibilities you must meet:

- be respectful of your co-workers and managers
- learn your role to ensure safety and fairness
- put in a reasonable effort and produce reasonable results



**Let's discuss!**

Discuss the questions below with your teacher or partner.

1. Have you experienced disrespectful treatment at work?
2. Have you ever experienced unfair treatment at work?
3. Have you worked in an unsafe workplace environment?



## Respect

Below we will consider workplace expectations in more detail. What should you expect from managers and co-workers? What are your responsibilities?

### 1. Respect

Respectful behaviour is essential for a good working environment. You have the right to be treated respectfully by co-workers and managers. You are also responsible to treat co-workers and managers the same way.

Some of the key elements of respectful behaviour include:

- making an effort to listen
- practicing politeness
- trying to be patient
- honesty
- reliability and trustworthiness
- tolerance and acceptance

One of the best ways to be respectful is to be a good collaborator. This means being a good teammate. Here are some keys to developing your collaboration skills:

- **Be a good listener.** Listening is the best way to connect with others. Try to:
  - stay focused and avoid distractions
  - avoid interrupting the speaker
  - watch for non-verbal cues like smiling, frowning, and body language
  - show that you understand by giving a thumbs up
  - ask questions if you don't understand something
- When people feel heard they will feel more respected.

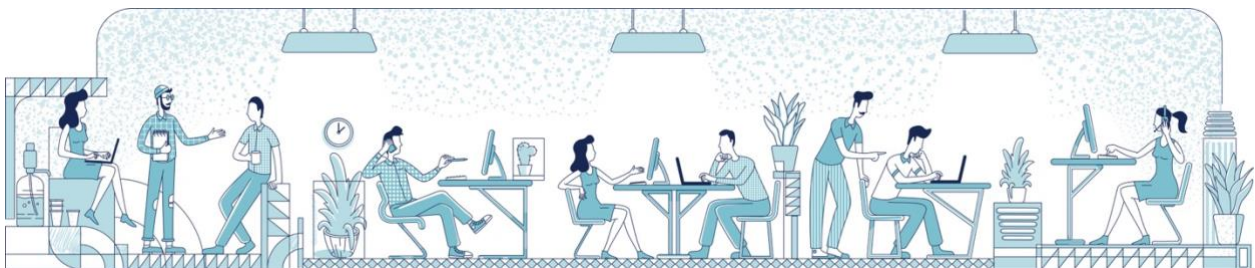


### New Task!

Have a conversation with a teacher or partner. Talk about what you both did on the weekend or any other topic. When you have finished, work together to complete the check list below.

Did you:

- ☐ stay alert during the conversation?
- ☐ avoid distractions and focus on what was being discussed?
- ☐ watch for non-verbal cues like smiling and frowning?
- ☐ watch your partner's body-language?
- ☐ occasionally meet the speakers eyes?
- ☐ smile, nod, or give a thumbs up to show you understood?
- ☐ ask questions if you didn't understand something?



Here are more keys to being a respectful collaborator:

- Be **polite**. Try to:
  - use polite expressions like please and thank you
  - avoid rude or vulgar language
  - be patient
- Be **reliable**. Try to:
  - be on time
  - do your fair share of the work
  - tell the truth
- Show **empathy**. Try to:
  - be accepting of differences
  - be understanding when co-workers are struggling
  - be supportive and helpful



### Reflect!

Reread the tips above about being respectful at work. Discuss these questions with your teacher or partner:

1. Do you think you are a good listener at work?
2. Do you think you are polite at work?
3. Do you think you are a reliable teammate at work?
4. Do you think that you are an empathetic co-worker?



### New Task!

Now you've thought about your respectfulness. It's time to test it out. After your next work shift, fill out the checklist below. Next time you go to class, work, or a meeting, were you:

- ☐ on time?
- ☐ a good listener?
- ☐ polite and patient?
- ☐ honest?
- ☐ tolerant of your co-workers?
- ☐ supportive of your co-workers?

Write down the ones you struggle with most. What are some ways you could try to improve? Discuss with your teacher or partner.



Just as you need to be respectful, you also deserve to be treated with respect. Your co-workers and managers should be polite and patient with you. They should be tolerant and supportive. They should be honest.

Most importantly, you should not face harassment or bullying at work. If this is happening to you, speak to management at once.



### New Task!

What is harassment? What is bullying?

1. Using a computer, do a Google search for “harassment at work.”
2. Click on one or more of the options.
3. Read about harassment at work.
4. Discuss with your teacher or partner.
5. Repeat this activity with “bullying at work.”

There will be tips below about **communicating effectively with managers**.

- Sometimes the harassment or bullying comes from the manager. If this is the case, seek outside guidance. There is information at the end of this resource for extra support.

## Fairness

### 2. Fairness

Canadian and provincial laws require that employees receive fair treatment in a number of ways. There are also workplace standards that all employers should follow. Below are some areas in which you should expect fairness:

- **Equity**

Employment equity law in Canada states that: “**Canadians have the right to be treated fairly in workplaces free from discrimination.**”

Discrimination means treating people unfairly based on gender, race, age, or religion. It is **illegal**. If you feel this is happening to you, see the supports at the end of this resource.

- **Pay**

When you are hired, your employer should tell you your **hourly wage**. This means how much money you will make per hour of work.

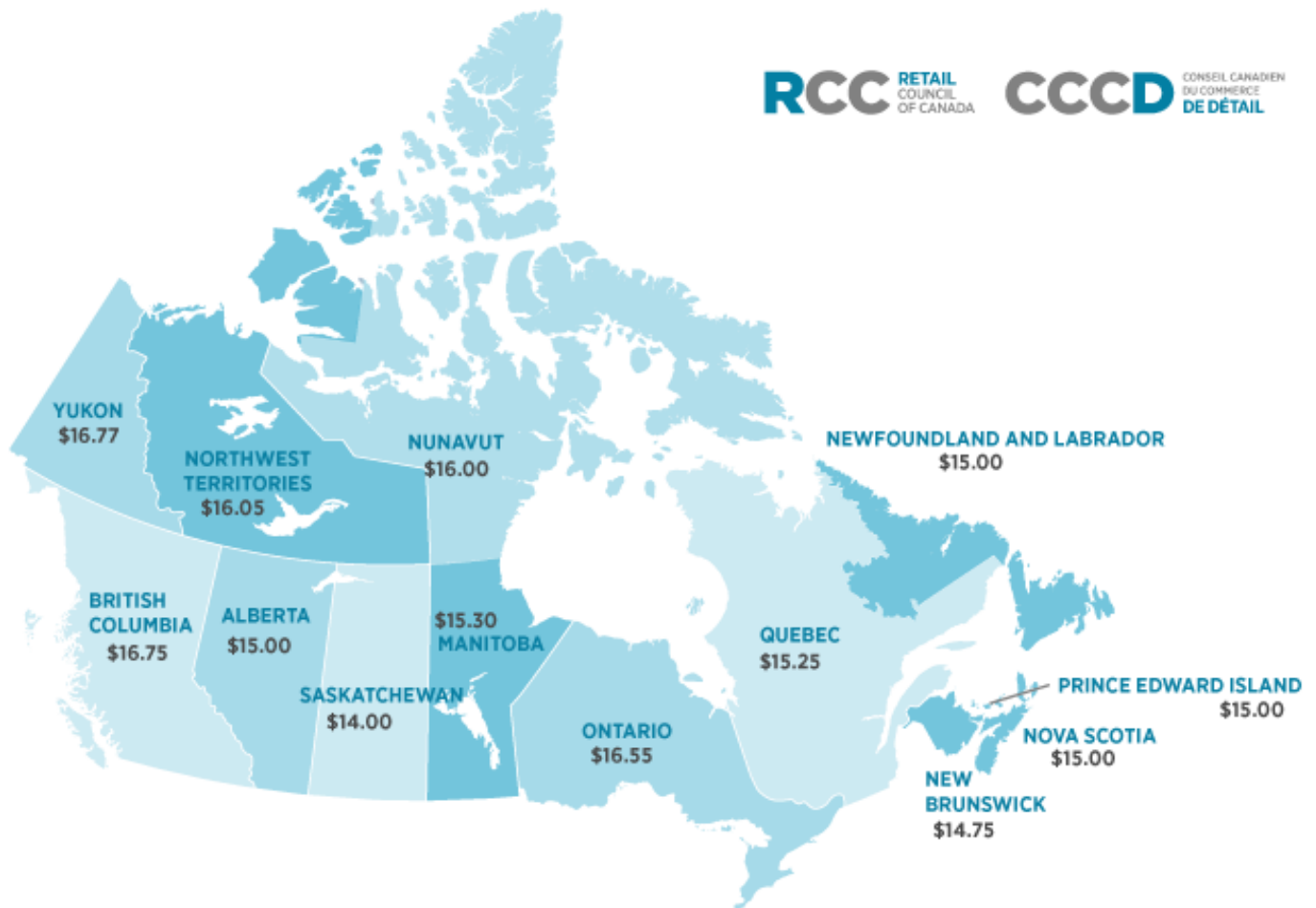
Some jobs are paid in a lump sum per job. But most jobs are paid at an hourly rate. Be sure you know how you are being paid.

You should know how much your hourly wage is. If you don't know, ask your manager. You should also keep track of your weekly hours. Always check your paystubs to be sure that you are being paid correctly.

You should **never** be paid less than the provincial minimum wage. See the next page for a map that shows minimum wages across Canada.

**RCC** RETAIL  
COUNCIL  
OF CANADA

**CCCCD** CONSEIL CANADIEN  
DU COMMERCE  
DE DÉTAIL



## MINIMUM HOURLY WAGE RATES AS OF OCT. 1, 2023

RETAIL COUNCIL OF CANADA

[RetailCouncil.org](http://RetailCouncil.org)

- **Work Hours**

You should be informed in advance of the hours you are expected to work that week. There should be a posted **schedule** at the workplace that shows this.

You can only be expected to work a certain number of hours at your hourly wage. In most provinces this is 8 hours in a row and 40 hours a week.

If you work more than this amount, you should be paid **overtime**. Overtime pay is 1.5 times your hourly wage.

Let's look at this for an hourly wage of \$20 per hour:

$$20 \times 1.5 = \mathbf{30}$$

If your hourly wage is \$20 per hour. Your overtime hourly wage would be \$30 per hour.

If one day you work 8 regular hours and 4 overtime hours, you would make:

$$20 \times 8 = \mathbf{160}$$

$$30 \times 4 = \mathbf{120}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 160 \\ + 120 \\ \hline = \mathbf{280} \end{array}$$



### New Task!

Overtime pay.

1. An employee makes \$20 per hour.
2. Their overtime wage is \$30 per hour.
3. In one week, they work 40 regular hours and 8 overtime hours,
4. Calculate their weekly income.

(Answer next page)



**Answer: Overtime Pay**

$$20 \times 40 = 800$$

$$30 \times 8 = 240$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 800 \\ + 240 \\ \hline = 1040 \end{array}$$

That week's income would be **\$1040**.



The amount of hours you can work before it is overtime varies by province. How many hours must you work before you are entitled to overtime?



### New Task!

Overtime hours.

1. Go to this website: <https://www.canpay.com/ontario-payroll-information.html#hours>
2. Look at the chart. It has information about pay rates in Ontario.
3. Find the line called “Overtime” in the column called “Period.”
4. Now look for the overtime hours in the column called “Rate.”
5. How many hours must you work in Ontario before you are entitled to overtime?

(Answer next page)

**Answer: Overtime hours**

44 hours



- **Breaks**

Canadian Labour Law says:

Every employee is entitled to an unpaid ½ **hour break** for every five hours of work.

- **Distribution of Tasks**

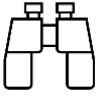
Everyone should do a reasonable share of the work as they are able.

You are responsible for doing your fair share of the work. It is also good collaboration to do a little extra if co-workers are struggling. But in general you should not do others' work for them.

If co-workers are not doing their share of the work, try to speak to them. This can be intimidating. Here are some phrases you could try to use:

- Would you mind taking your turn now?
- Let's each do this much.
- Can you please help now?

Hopefully, polite requests like this will fix the problem. If nothing changes, speak to a manager.

**An Example:**

A dishwasher finds that their partner keeps leaving during their shift. The partner leaves at the busiest times. The dishwasher does more than their share of the work. They don't know how to speak to their partner and don't say anything.

They fall behind and there are not enough dishes for the restaurant. The manager is very upset with the situation.

**Reflect!**

It's time to reflect on what you have learned:

1. Read the example above about the dishwasher.
2. Read the phrases above that could be used to speak to co-workers about workload.
3. What could the dishwasher have said to their partner?
4. Have you ever done more than your share at work?

## Guidance and Communication

### 3. Guidance and Communication

You should expect to receive guidance and support from co-workers and managers. When you begin a job, you will need to be taught your duties and the rules of the workplace. You should receive instructions on all new tasks. As you are learning, you should expect patience and understanding.

You should also expect clear and open communication with your manager and co-workers. You should be granted the chance to speak to your manager. If you email your manager, you should receive a prompt response.

Some of the communication you should expect at work include:

- **Feedback:** Managers should provide you with feedback about how you are doing. This may come as guidance for improvement. It may come as recognition of the good work you are doing.
- **Motivation:** Leaders are good at motivating workers toward goals. The best managers will make you feel part of a team with a common purpose.
- **Support:** Managers are responsible for supporting employees. Co-workers should also try to support each other.



Here are some keys to effective communication:

- Be **clear** and **direct**. It's important for your manager to clearly understand the issues. Remember to:
  - speak slowly and clearly
  - speak at a loud enough volume
  - make eye contact
- Speak with **confidence**. Some people get nervous when speaking to bosses. Some people feel ashamed when asking for support. Try not to:
  - speak too fast
  - mumble
  - bow your head
- Try **not to be emotional**. Try to:
  - take a deep breath through the nose before speaking
  - smile
  - keep your arms uncrossed (crossed arms can make you seem angry)
- Be **professional**. Remember that you are in a work environment. Even urgent matters should be communicated professionally. Try to:
  - be polite (don't swear)
  - keep a positive manner
  - wait your turn (don't interrupt)



### New Task!

Asking for support.

1. Have you ever struggled with a new task at work? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
2. Imagine asking for guidance and support for the new task. Write down what you might say. How would you explain what you need? What questions would you ask? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. Reread the tips for effective communication above. Now practice asking for guidance and support with your teacher or partner. Did you:
  - ☐ speak slowly and clearly?
  - ☐ speak at a loud enough volume?
  - ☐ make eye contact?
  - ☐ speak politely and professionally?
  - ☐ keep a positive manner?
  - ☐ say thank you afterward?

Now you know some keys to effective communication. The next step is understanding **when** you should communicate.

- Communicate urgent matters right away. Urgent matters include:
  - dangerous situations
  - costly mistakes
  - bullying or harrassment
- Seek out help when you are **struggling**. Are you facing physical or mental challenges? Let your manager know and get support.
- Seek out help when you are **confused** or need guidance. This may not be an urgent matter. But you should address it quickly.
- Ask for **advice** when you start new tasks or roles. New roles can be hard. Get guidance from co-workers and management before you begin.
- Ask for **feedback** regularly. Check in with your manager every few months. Ask how you are doing. Ask about ways that you might improve.

Sometimes it's best to make an appointment to speak to a manager. You will do so with an email. Below is an example of a professional email:

Good afternoon [Manager's Name],

I would like to request a meeting with you **at your earliest convenience**. I have a few questions I would like to ask you. **I would be grateful for a few moments of your time. Please let me know what time works for you.**

Thank you,  
[Your Name]

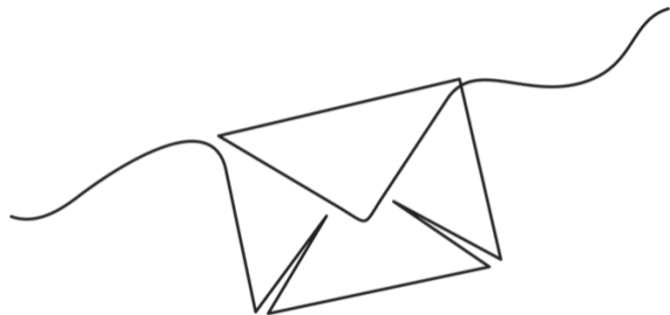
The phrases in bold are professional language that is commonly used:

- **At your earliest convenience.** This means as soon as possible.
- **I would be grateful for a few moments of your time.** This is a polite way to ask for a meeting from a superior.
- **Please let me know what time works for you.** This is a professional way to ensure you get a response.

**New Task!**

Making an appointment.

1. Reread the email above.
2. Write your own email to request an appointment with your manager. Use professional language.



## Safe And Secure Work Environment

### 4. Safe and Secure Work Environment

Employers have a responsibility to provide a safe and secure workplace. This means that employees should be free from risks of mental or physical harm while at work. Employees have a responsibility to report any unsafe conditions to managers.



#### **New Task!**

Unsafe working conditions.

1. Read the list of unsafe conditions below.
2. When you go to work, watch for unsafe conditions. Or try at home.
3. Check any boxes that apply.
4. Report any unsafe conditions to managers.

#### **Unsafe Working Conditions:**

- ☐ defective equipment
- ☐ exposed wiring
- ☐ exposure to toxins
- ☐ fire hazards
- ☐ blocked safety exits
- ☐ inadequate safety equipment or warning systems
- ☐ improper use of personal protective equipment
- ☐ excessively poor lighting or loud noises
- ☐ harassment or discrimination
- ☐ insufficient training
- ☐ unmanageable workloads

## Accountability

### 5. Accountability

All of this comes down to one thing: accountability. This means being responsible for your actions at work. You should expect this from managers and co-workers. And you must be accountable too.

Accountability involves:

- meeting your responsibilities
- following workplace rules and norms
- putting in a reasonable effort and getting reasonable results
- taking ownership of your mistake
- admitting when you are wrong

Watch the following video about how to take responsibility and accountability at work:





1. Re-watch the video above.
2. What are the four types of workplace responsibility?

3. What are the three aspects of accountability?
4. Do you think you are good at being accountable? What are some ways you could improve? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

## Skills for success

### Skills for Success and Treatment in the Workplace

The **Skills for Success** (SFS) are the everyday skills Canadians need for work, learning and life. Several SFS help you meet your responsibilities and ensure fair treatment at work:

- **Collaboration.** Developing good collaboration skills is the first step to meeting your responsibilities and ensuring fair treatment at work. It will help you earn trust and respect. It will help you demonstrate trustworthiness and reliability. It will make you a key part of the workplace team.
- **Communication.** Good communication will help ensure you get the guidance and support you need. It will help you be clear on workplace instructions and responsibilities. It will reduce the risk of unsafe working conditions.
- **Adaptability.** Meeting your responsibilities and being accountable often involves learning to be adaptable. Becoming a good employee means learning to grow and change.
- **Problem Solving.** When you know your rights, problems can be addressed.
- **Numeracy skills.** Numeracy skills will help you understand your wages, overtime and other aspects of your workplace rights.

Learn more about the Skills for Success here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/training/initiatives/skills-success.html>

## Next Steps

Now you know how you should expect to be treated at work. If you are not being treated appropriately seek help. There are many resources available to you:

- Settlement.org offers resources for employees facing discrimination at work:  
<https://settlement.org/ontario/employment/my-rights-at-work/basic-working-conditions/what-is-discrimination-at-work-what-can-i-do-if-i-am-being-discriminated-against-at-work/>
  - The Government of Ontario offers support for workplace harassment:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/workplace-harassment-information-workers>
  - 211 Ontario connects you to social services and community supports that you need:
    - Call **211** or toll free at **1-877-330-3213**
  - Is your boss not addressing a serious matter? You can file a complaint with the **Ontario Government**: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/filing-workplace-health-and-safety-complaint>
  - **Employment Ontario** offers career-related counselling and guidance:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>
  - Are you a New Canadian? Are you not getting fair treatment at work? **Workers Action Centre** offers services and support:
    - Call **1-855-531-0778**
- Also see the other resources in this series: **Workplace Skills, Strategies, and Know-How**