



Working in the Canadian Workplace

HANDBOOK

A Guide for Newcomers to Canada working in Construction, Manufacturing, Service and Other Related Sectors

Paul A. Holmes



Working in the Canadian Workplace - HANDBOOK. 2012

This resource is for recent immigrants to Canada with lower English skills who are working in the Canadian workplace. This handbook gives immigrants a better understanding of an employer's expectations for them. It also gives practical ways to achieve those expectations. This learning will support language, intercultural and other integration-related needs.

This handbook can be used independently for self-directed learning, or as a resource in coaching/mentoring scenarios, training workshops, or related courses. It can be used in organizations by employers, employees and trainers, or in educational settings such as schools, colleges or community agencies.

Alberta Human Services - Citizenship & Immigration Canada

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How to use This Handbook

The best way to use this handbook is to read each of the twelve strategies carefully. A strategy is like a plan. You make plan before you do something important. In this case, a newcomer needs a plan for how to think, act and speak in the Canadian workplace. This is really important because a newcomer works with both Canadians and newcomers from other cultures. The 12 strategies were chosen to go into this handbook through the help of newcomers and employers. These 12 strategies are common difficulties that many newcomers, from many different cultures, experience when they start to work in Canada. Here is how to use the handbook:

- 1. Newcomers.** The handbook can be used by newcomers for self-directed study, which means studying independently without a teacher. A newcomer will probably need to use a dictionary to learn new vocabulary. Also, a newcomer may need to talk with coworkers or friends to understand a few of the concepts in this handbook.
- 2. Employers, Managers and Mentors.** Use the handbook as a tool to discuss cultural differences, to build your own understanding of how difficult integration can be without support, and to help support change. Both the newcomer and employer/manager should read the information in this handbook. In addition, you can access the companion resource “Working with Newcomers: Tips for Culturally-Diverse Canadian Organizations”, available at www.awes.ca/uploads/1/0/8/8/10881793/companion_resource_guide.pdf.
- 3. Trainers.** Use the handbook in the classroom setting to teach newcomers about the basics of workplace integration. Use the handbook together with other language, cultural, Essential Skills and related resources.

How Each Strategy is Organized

There are 12 strategies. Each strategy is organized in the following way:

Newcomer Story	You will find a true story about a newcomer at the beginning of every strategy. The story explains the strategy through the life of the newcomer in Canada. It tells you about their difficulties, how they adapted and succeeded, and what they learned.
What Why How	This section gives a definition of the strategy (the “what”). It gives the reason it is important (the “why”). It also gives ideas of how to do it (the “how”).
Employer Expectation	These are things an employer expects you to know and do. The employer will not tell you these things. You need to know them before you go into the workplace.
Box	The boxes are cultural facts or extra information that you should know. They will help you work effectively with Canadians and other newcomers.



Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is a “handbook”?** A handbook gives a learner short pieces of information. It explains the most important information on a topic. This handbook focuses on how to work successfully in the Canadian workplace.
- 2. Who should use the handbook?** Newcomers to Canada, employers and trainers in the construction, manufacturing, service, hospitality and other trades-related sectors.
- 3. What Canadian Language Benchmark is this handbook written at?** Newcomers need a minimum of CLB 5 to use this handbook independently. Some vocabulary and sentence structures are at CLB 6. Learners at CLB 4 will need some learning supports to use this resource, such as a classroom setting. Most learners will need a dictionary to understand and remember job-specific and conceptual vocabulary.
- 4. What kind of information is in this handbook?** It explains 12 strategies that newcomers need to use in their new Canadian workplaces. Many newcomers don’t meet all of these expectations. They come from workplace cultures with different expectations e.g. how to disagree with a coworker or how to use time. If a newcomer understands and acts on these 12 strategies, then their workplace integration experience is much easier.
- 5. What is workplace integration?** Workplace integration is an experience that newcomers have. It is the process of adapting, or changing, certain ways of thinking, speaking and acting in the workplace. Many of these changes are cultural. Canada is a new culture. The Canadian workplace culture is new. Most newcomers need to make a few changes, so that they can work well with Canadians and other newcomers.
- 6. Where did the information come from?** This handbook was developed from information collected between 2004 and 2011. The information came from newcomers and employers, from hundreds of surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and training workshops. The information in this handbook doesn’t teach everything about workplace integration for newcomers. It should be used with other resources whenever possible.
- 7. Will the handbook teach me English?** Yes, there are many new words you will need to learn. However, this handbook will teach you more about how to use the English you already have. It will explain to you what cultural behaviors you might need to change at work. It will “raise your awareness”, which means it will make you listen and watch everyone and everything at work much more. It will be easier to see what is different in the Canadian workplace compared with the culture in your first country. It will help you feel more comfortable and confident at work. Remember, you work in one of the most multicultural workplaces in the world - you will need to learn a few things and change a few behaviors so that you can work well with anyone from any culture.



Workplace safety standards in Canada are often much higher than the safety standards in many other countries.

Many newcomers are surprised by the safety rules when they first start working in Canada. At first, they think the safety standards are too high, or not important. However, a few months later, those newcomers will also say Canadian employers give some of the best safety training to their employees. They will also say you can get into a lot of trouble with your employer, your coworkers or even the law, if you don't follow all the safety rules at work.

Many newcomers come from parts of the world where safety is not as important as getting the job finished quickly and under budget. Working quickly and under budget are important at any job site, but safety must always be more important than anything else.

FACTS

- ▶ There are about 270 million safety incidents at work each year in the world.
- ▶ Each day, about 6,000 workers die due to work-related incidents or diseases.
- ▶ This totals more than 2.2 million deaths a year.
- ▶ About 350,000 deaths are from workplace accidents, 1.7 million are from work-related diseases, and 158,000 are due to transportation accidents.
- ▶ Each year, workers cause safety incidents that result in absences from work of 3 days or more.

The 8 Habits of Very Safe Workers

Read through the following general safety rules that newcomers must know on their first day at work. They are 8 habits of workers who always work safely. A safety habit is something that a person does so many times, that it becomes a natural part of the day, like breathing.

1. Think Safe

Safety begins with your thinking. You need to think safe before you start working. To think safe do the following:

- **Look for safety hazards.** Hazards are things or actions which might hurt someone. Identify and stop those hazards before they happen. This means thinking about hazards 5 minutes, 30 minutes, or even hours and days before you start your work.
- **Compare Canada and your first country.** When you learn about safety in the Canadian workplace, think of your workplace in your first country. Ask yourself: Were the safety standards in my first country the same as here in Canada? Compare safety topics in your new workplace with your previous workplace. Take note of differences. Follow the safety standards for Canada. Change your thinking and practices so that you can protect yourself and your team members.
- **Be open to learning.** Don't think and act like you know everything about safety. Everyone needs to learn and be reminded about safety every day, otherwise people become careless or lazy. Think and act safely for yourself and your coworkers.
- **Take the "family" test.** Do you practice workplace safety at home? Do you teach it to your family so that they practice safety at home? If you can answer "yes" to both those questions, you are probably a very safe worker.



2. Think Safe for Your Coworkers

You need to practice workplace safety for yourself and for your coworkers. When you are looking for hazards or planning a job, think about how other people might get hurt. Don't just think about your own safety. Identify ways to prevent injuries or incidents. You need to help keep your work partners and your team safe.

3. Tell Your Supervisor When You Are Hurt

Sometimes people get hurt and then try to hide the injury so that they can continue to work.

For example, a person might pull a muscle in his back, or sprain her ankle. When he arrives at work, he doesn't tell the supervisor that he is injured. He is worried he might lose his shifts and pay. He is worried he might lose his job, if he tells the supervisor about the injury. So he continues to work and the injury becomes worse. Eventually, he has to take time off work to recover. So, the injury takes longer to heal because the injury wasn't treated at the beginning.

This doesn't have to happen. Most supervisors prefer to keep you working on "light duty" than send you home. You will not lose your job. It costs too much money to train new workers to do a job that you are good at. If an employer has paid to advertise a job, to interview you, and then to train you, the employer will want to keep you. No matter who you are, you are valuable to the company and your coworkers. Tell your supervisor when you are hurt. He or she will make arrangements to help you.

4. Avoid the Most Common On-the-Job Injuries

The most common on-the-job injury in Canada is overexertion. Exertion means using physical or mental energy. Overexertion means making your body do more than it can. Then your body gets hurt. Exerting too much energy usually results in an injury. The most common injuries to workers are sprains, strains and tears. The spine, the wrists and ankles are the body parts that workers injure most often.

- **Listen to your body.** Stop working whenever you feel you are pushing your body too much. Take a short break. Stretch your muscles.
- **Make changes.** Be careful when you are doing the same activity repeatedly, using the same muscles again and again. You will hurt your muscles and joints. Take a break. Do something different. Then come back and do the activity later. Try to use different muscles during your shift. Do lots of stretching.

5. Ask When You are Unsure

Sometimes newcomers don't understand workplace safety because English is too difficult to understand. They don't want to ask because they don't want coworkers to think their English skills are low. When you don't understand someone or something for safety, you must ask. When you ask, your coworkers will trust you more. They will understand that you want to work safely. Remember, you are responsible for your own safety and for your coworkers' safety. If you make a mistake that hurts a coworker, you are responsible.



6. Say No to Unsafe Work

“I am sorry. I cannot do this work because I think it is unsafe for me and the team.” This is what you say to your supervisor, team or work partner, if they ask you to do something unsafe. In Canada, you have the right to refuse unsafe work. In fact, you must say no to unsafe work, according to Occupational Health and Safety laws. Your safety and your coworkers’ safety is at risk, if you don’t say no. Your employer must always make sure you are qualified to do a job.

If you are not qualified, you will need to take training. You might need to work with a partner who is qualified. he or she can teach you. But don’t confuse unsafe work with your regular job duties. For example, if you have to work high above the ground, and you are scared of heights, this is not unsafe work. It is only unsafe if you don’t have the proper training or the right safety gear (equipment). It could also be unsafe if the conditions are bad e.g. stormy weather.

7. Wear Your PPE

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is one of the most important safety practices in the workplace. PPE is used to protect your body. Using PPE includes protecting your head, eyes, ears, hands, feet and legs. It includes equipment such as hard hats, goggles, masks, ear plugs, gloves, body suits and boots. PPE also includes things like respirators, harnesses and lifelines. Always wear your PPE. Almost half of all workplace injuries are to the head, hands and face. Most of those injuries can be prevented or minimized by using your PPE.

8. Do Your Hazard Assessment

No one knows when an injury or incident is going to happen. However, you can help prevent these if do a hazard assessment. A “hazard” is an activity or a situation that could cause an incident or injury to you or someone else. For example, a piece of wood with a nail sticking up, or driving when you are tired. A “hazard assessment” is a way of identifying hazards before they happen.

A hazard assessment is done at the beginning of your shift. During your shift, you must continue to look for and prevent hazards as you work. You can do a hazard assessment the following way:

Step 1 - Identify any potential hazards, or accidents that could happen.

Step 2 - Assess each hazard. Decide how dangerous the hazard is: high - medium - low.

Step 3 - Control the hazard: develop a plan to minimize or stop the hazard.

Your company should have a hazard assessment form. This is a document you fill in with a pen at the start of every shift. If a hazard assessment is not a normal part of your job, do one by yourself to stay safe.



Strategies to Start

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Strategy 1

Set Your Goals

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Strategy 1 Set Your Goals



Newcomer Story - “Ngo’s Career Goal”

Ngo came to Canada from South-east Asia. He was in his early twenties. Ngo had **apprenticed** for two years to be a machinist in his country, before he immigrated. Because Ngo had no English skills, it was difficult for him to get the same job in Canada. He found work in a **manufacturing** company, but the work was not in his **trade**. It was too easy and he was soon bored. It was also difficult to keep a job. When the **economy** slowed down in Canada, Ngo was one of the first workers to lose his job.

However, Ngo didn’t become negative or sad. He took a notebook and wrote down his goal - “to work as a machinist”. He wrote down a specific date - within two years. Then, he **identified** the skills he needed. English skills were most important. Ngo joined a language training course for newcomers to Canada. The program was paid for by the government. He studied English for nine months. To make money, he took a **survival job**, as a pizza maker. Many English-speaking teenagers worked with him. He was able to practice English all the time.

Ngo also used the internet to understand the **certification process** for machinists in Canada. He soon found a job as an **apprentice** machinist at a company. He worked as an apprentice for four years. Each year, he spent six weeks at school. At the end of four years, Ngo became certified as a **journeyman** machinist. Each year his **wage** increased.

Ngo also studied English by himself at home and on the train to work. He wrote down two goals for English. First, he wanted to be able to explain his ideas and opinions clearly. Second, he wanted to understand more than 80 percent of what his coworkers said. His English became really strong. One year later, the company hired temporary foreign workers (TFWs) from his country. Their English skills were very low. Ngo was **promoted to team lead** because his English was strong. He acted as a **translator** for the TFWs. The company paid for Ngo to take supervisor training. Eventually, Ngo had to stop working as a machinist. His job had become more than he **expected**.

Ngo did three things correctly. First, he set goals, instead of feeling negative. Second, he identified the specific skills he needed to **achieve** the goals - apprenticeship, certification, and strong English. Third, he always welcomed new opportunities. He became a team lead by using his first language - something he never expected. There are many opportunities that will come to you in your career. Get the important **technical** and language skills so that you can take the opportunities for your future.

“I decided on the job I really wanted. I found out which skills I needed. I went to school to learn those skills. But I am also glad I stayed open to new opportunities. Now, I am doing things that I never imagined.”



What are goals?

Goals are the things you want to do in your job and life. Setting career goals means deciding what you want to achieve in your job. What do you want to learn? What do you want to become? What do you want to be doing in one year? In three years? In five years?



For example, in the story about Ngo, he set a goal to work as a machinist within two years. He identified the skills he needed, such as better English. He also identified the qualifications he needed, such as the certification for a journeyman machinist.

Main Point - Be flexible. Set your career goals, but be ready for unexpected or new opportunities.

Why are goals important?

Goals help you to focus your energy. They keep you motivated when you have problems. Achieving a goal gives you an amazing feeling of success. This feeling helps you achieve your next goal.

How to set career goals.

Goal setting is very important for newcomers to Canada. Newcomers are starting a new life in a new country. Use the following suggestions to set your career goals:

1. **Make the goal achievable** - Choose a goal that you can achieve. It must be challenging, but also possible. Don't make it too easy. If the goal is important to you, you will be able to achieve it.
2. **Be clear and specific** - The more specific the goal, the better chance you have of achieving the goal. Write it down. You need to see the goal on paper, outside of your head. You need to be able to look at it again next week and next month. Also, you will get more ideas and information to write down later. Your goal will evolve, or change from simple to more detailed, as you learn more.
3. **Set a timeline** - Write down a specific time (year, month, day) to achieve the goal. Have both short-term (6-18 months) and medium-term (2-3 years) goals. You might even have goals over a long-term (up to 5 years or more).
4. **Identify the smaller steps to the goal** - Write out the steps to reach each goal. Build in small rewards for each time you reach a goal. Do you have to learn something technical? Do you need to get certified? Do you need to learn English? Which English skill - speaking, listening, reading, writing, pronunciation?
5. **Learn to say no** - You need to use your time well. You need to say "no" to some things so that you can say yes to other things. Your actions will either move you towards or away from your goal.

Strategy 1 Set your goals.

6. **Ask other people** - Get advice from your coworkers on good career opportunities. You Canadian coworkers will give you ideas, if you ask. Be aware of new opportunities at work e.g. new job postings, new projects.
7. **Let your goal evolve** - New information might cause you to change your goal a little. Let your goals grow and change as you learn new things. But don't stop reaching for your goal.
8. **Stay motivated** - Use the same motivation that helped you start life in Canada to keep you moving forward to your goal.



Employer Expectation 1 Set your own career goals

Most employers will expect you to develop your own career plan. This is not your employer's responsibility. You need to set your own career goals.

After the company employs you, you need to decide what other skills you want to learn. Do you want to cross-train, or become a team lead or supervisor? Do you want to mentor new employees and apprentices? What do you want to be doing in one year? In three years? In five years?

Your company wants you to learn and grow in new skills and knowledge. The company will help you, but they will not plan your career for you. Once you understand your job well, you should talk to your supervisor about growing in your career. Your supervisor can tell you about the future opportunities in the company, but you must make the decisions and the plans.



BOX 1 Four "Must Do's"

Don't stop learning. As a newcomer, continuous learning is a secret to success in your job. Too many newcomers stop learning when they get a job. Your employer expects you to learn English, to understand your workplace culture and to make safety the most important part of your job. There are four things you "must do" for your career in Canada.

1. Do your job better than what your employer expects from you.
2. Learn more English than "just enough".
3. Understand your workplace culture. This handbook can help you understand the culture.
4. Make workplace safety the most important part of your day.



Newcomer Story - “Lee Adapts”

Lee came to Canada from Asia. In his country, Lee had worked as an electrical engineer for 15 years. When he arrived in Canada, it was difficult to find work as an engineer. His English skills were not strong enough. Lee changed his career. He applied to take a test to work as an **industrial electrician**. He studied six months for the test. He passed the test and was certified as an industrial electrician.

Lee found a job with a good company. He didn't need strong English skills to do the job well. He was put into a team with other electricians. He had to work with a partner named Doug. Doug was born in Canada. He had worked as an industrial electrician for 15 years. Doug and Lee had to work closely together. They had to make decisions together, **on-the-job**. They had to work safe because their job had **hazards** - very powerful electricity.

Lee felt that Doug didn't **respect** him. Lee was learning many things on-the-job from Doug, but Lee had been to university. In his previous country, electrical engineers were more respected than electricians. Doug didn't care about Lee's previous education. Doug always said, “It doesn't matter what you did before. Doing your job right the first time is the only thing that matters to me.”

In his previous country, Lee had been a **project** supervisor. He led teams of people. To get respect, Lee began to disagree with Doug on every decision. He wanted Doug to give him respect - to listen to him. Lee felt like he had a hole inside of himself. He felt he had left part of himself behind in his first country.

A short time later, the company gave **intercultural** training to their employees. Lee enjoyed the training. He learnt about “building **credibility** in the workplace”. Credibility is the trust and respect a person has from their coworkers. Lee began to understand that different cultures have different ways of building credibility. In the Canadian workplace, credibility comes from doing a job well. It doesn't come from age, education, or job title. Lee began to understand that he had to change his thinking. He made a list of the advantages and disadvantages of changing the way he built credibility. This helped him see the value of adapting. He saw the value of working with Doug. His partner had lots of respect (credibility) with their team; Lee wanted this too.

Soon, Lee began to **adapt** to his new workplace culture. He chose to learn everything he could learn from Doug. He stopped arguing with Doug. He asked Doug to **explain** difficult English words to him. Doug was happy to help. Doug's respect began to grow for Lee. He respected Lee's **effort** to learn and to be **flexible** in a new workplace culture.

“Canadian coworkers think and act differently to coworkers in my first country. I can't change the people here in Canada. I can only change myself. I want to adapt to my new life.”



What does “to adapt” mean?

To adapt means to change and grow as a person. To adapt to the workplace culture in Canada means you accept new ways of thinking and behaving. It doesn't mean that you lose the ways of thinking and behaving from your first culture. Instead, you add new ways for the Canadian workplace, without losing your first ways. Adapting does mean thinking and behaving differently in some workplace situations. Adapting to a new culture, learning English, and developing job skills are like keys to job success - they open new opportunities for you.



Main Point - Adapting to the culture of the workplace is a key to job success.

For example, in the story about Lee, he adapted to how employees build their credibility, or respect, in the Canadian workplace. Instead of trying to build credibility through his education or job title, he began to build his credibility by doing his work really well, each time.

Why adapt?

The Canadian workplace is a new culture. Some of the ways of thinking and behaving from your first culture are not going to work in the Canadian workplace culture. If Canadians immigrate to your first country, they also need to adapt to that workplace culture. The more you adapt and learn, the more job success you will achieve. To begin with, you need to understand how your workplace uses time and how people communicate. You must know how they work with together as supervisors, peers and subordinates. This handbook is designed to help you understand the workplace culture better.

How to adapt.

Adapting is very important for newcomers to Canada. Newcomers are starting a new life in a new country. Use the following suggestions to adapt to your Canadian workplace:

1. **Accept that cultural differences are real in the workplace** - Don't think that all workplace cultures in all countries are all the same. Accept that there are differences, and that you need to make some changes in your thinking and behaving. In fact, workplace cultures can be very different between different companies or between occupations. For example, the workplace culture for customer service is different to the culture in a manufacturing shop or on a construction site. Expect to see differences in workplace cultures. Don't be worried about these differences. You learned how to live and work in your first culture. You can do the same in the Canadian workplace.

2. **Know that to adapt is to add, not to lose culture** - Some newcomers worry about losing their first cultures. They believe they must replace their first culture with Canadian workplace culture. Sometimes newcomers do have to replace certain ways of behaving and thinking. But most of the time, newcomers add new ways, without losing the ways from their first cultures. For example, in the story about Lee, he added a new way of building credibility with coworkers. He began to build his reputation as an electrician by doing his work really well. He still had his engineering education. He didn't lose it. One day in the future, his engineering education could help him. But, at this time, Lee must use the new way of building credibility at work.
3. **Understand that adapting is a process, it is not immediate** - The world around you has changed - you now live in Canada. This change happened quickly. You climbed onto an airplane and, in a few hours, you landed in Canada. But inside of you, change is much slower. It could take months or years to feel like you are confident and comfortable in the Canadian workplace. This is a process. You can't rush it, but you can help it to happen. Learning is one way to understand the changes inside of you. This handbook is designed to help you understand change and the workplace.
4. **Make a decision to change** - Change can take a long time. Sometimes newcomers get stuck. They want to change a certain behavior. In Lee's story, he made a list of the advantages and disadvantages of adapting to his new workplace culture. Lee's list helped him to make a decision, and to take action.



Employer Expectation 2

Figure out the workplace culture

Most employers expect you to figure out the workplace culture by yourself. To “figure out” means to find, learn and understand. Most workplace cultures are not written down. You have to look for them. You can see Canadian culture in the behaviors of your Canadian coworkers and hear it in their words. This handbook is like a pair of glasses to help you see the workplace culture clearly.

Once you understand this handbook, you will know what to look for in the workplace. You will notice how people use time at work. You will understand how hierarchy (power differences) works between supervisors and teams. You will see how credibility (respect and trust) is built, and how coworkers develop good workplace friendships.

Look for the differences in the workplace. Compare how people work in your first culture to how people work in your Canadian workplace. Also see the similarities, which are just as important.

This handbook is designed to help you figure out workplace culture. The 12 strategies and 10 tip sheets in this handbook focus on cultural differences. Other newcomers and Canadians identified these strategies and tips as the most common cultural differences in the workplace.

5. **Learn English** - This handbook is a tool to help you understand workplace culture. However, it is only useful if your English reading skills are good. Strong English skills are also essential, if you want to adapt to your workplace culture. You need to be able to understand the behaviors and ideas of coworkers. You should also use English to share your own thoughts and ideas. English is the key that will open many career opportunities for you.
6. **Use the supports** - Every province, city, organization and team has supports for people. Supports are people and programs that help newcomers. These supports help newcomers grow in their skills. Provinces have immigrant serving agencies, cities have training programs at schools and colleges, companies have mentoring programs for employees, teams have people who enjoy helping others. Ask. Find out. Don't be shy. Ask your employer to start a workplace English course in the company. Join an English course at a local college or school. Ask your employer if the company can help pay for your study fees. It will cost you time now, but becoming strong in English will help you now and in your future years.



BOX 2 Don't Judge. Use Intercultural Thinking.

Canada has a very multicultural workplace. Sometimes, a Canadian or another newcomer says or does something you don't like. You get angry or upset. In this situation, "don't judge" the person or the behavior. You might be angry or upset about something that was not meant to be personal. It might just be cultural differences. Instead, think of the following:

1. Does the person do or say it to everyone, or only to you? If it's everyone, you may not need to say anything.
2. Try to use your cultural knowledge to understand the other person. This handbook helps you understand cultural differences. Ask yourself "What could be the person's real motivation? Could it be a cultural difference?" Even if it really annoys you, don't judge.
3. Think about what you know about culture from this handbook. Is there a difference in cultural communication? Is it a difference in how people use time or how quickly they work? Is it about power? Is the problem due to low English skills. Is it Canadian culture, which is different to your culture?
4. Don't judge. You might be offended, and the person did not want to offend you. You can usually avoid problems later by just asking yourself: what is really happening?
5. Take a deep breath. Put your shoulders back. Take it easy. Think about it carefully. Get relaxed before you say anything to the person. Take your emotions out of your thoughts. You can think better without strong emotions. Sometimes you need to wait a few minutes or a day before you say anything.
6. When you do say something, tell the person what happened and how you felt. Tell them you want to understand, not misunderstand what happened. Ask the person to explain. Be curious and relaxed, not stressed when you talk.

Remember, you work in one of the most multicultural workplaces in the world. Sometimes coworkers will act differently to what you expect. Sometimes you have to accept differences, especially if the person does it to everybody, not just you.

Strategies for English



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Strategy 3 Use Only English



Case Study “Herc Finds His Confidence”

Herc immigrated to Canada from South-east Asia. He found a job in a manufacturing company. His team gave him the **nickname** Herc, a short form of the name Hercules, because he was so strong. Hercules was a famous god from Greek myth, who was very strong. Herc was short, but nothing was too heavy for him to lift. He was also a very good machine **operator**. The difficult thing for Herc was speaking English.

Herc never went to any English classes for newcomers. Instead, when he arrived in Canada, he started work immediately. He learned a little English by working with his Canadian coworkers. But Herc had no **confidence** to speak in English.

However, everyone on the team had to speak good English because they had to work together closely. They had weekly **toolbox talks**. Each person had to give an update on their work by answering the following questions: What have you finished? What still needs to be finished? What will you not finish on time? Where do you need some help?

Herc never said anything. He just smiled and nodded. His silence made the team uncomfortable. Herc’s silence, his lack of **contribution**, made it difficult to **coordinate** work between team members.

During lunch times and coffee breaks, Herc would hide away from his coworkers. He would sit alone, behind the big machine he used for his job, and eat his sandwich. His supervisor felt badly for Herc. In fact, there were twelve newcomers in the company that needed more English to grow in their jobs. The company decided to provide English in the Workplace classes to the newcomers. The English course was three hours per class, twice a week. Half the training was during company time, and the other half was on the employees’ time. The course lasted one year. The supervisor invited Herc to join. Herc decided to join the English training.

The change in Herc’s English was amazing. Newcomers who learn English in their workplaces learn quickly. The newcomers began to use notebooks at work to write down new words and other things they didn’t understand in English. Their vocabulary and listening skills grew quickly.

Herc’s team began to ask him to sit with them at break times. Herc began to use his English. Most importantly, he began to give updates at team meetings on his work progress. His English wasn’t perfect, but the company never hired him to speak perfect English. His employer just wanted Herc grow his English so that it would be strong enough to do his job safely in a team.

“The most important decision I ever made in my job was to continue to learn workplace English.”



What does “use only English” mean?

To use only English means using English as your language at work. It means always trying to use English first, before your first language. It means using English even with coworkers who speak the same language as you. This is not a rule. It is a suggestion. You are free to speak your language anywhere. However, there are advantages to using English as your first choice.

Why use English only?

- **Respect.** The more English you use, the more respect you will get from your coworkers. They will see you are trying to learn. Coworkers respect a person who is really trying to learn a skill, even before the person has the skill.
- **Help.** The more you show you are trying to use English, the more coworkers will want to help you. They will be more patient because they see you are trying.
- **Trust.** When you use another language in the workplace, other coworkers are left out of the conversation. People usually think that other people are talking about them, if they don't understand the language. It is difficult to build trust between you and other colleagues who don't speak your first language. Rather use English.
- **Growth.** The more English you use, the stronger your language skills will become. You will become more confident as well. Your confidence in English at work will go with you into your family life and community. You will not need to rely on your family or friends to help you with English. You will eventually be able to help others.

How to use only English.

1. **Don't stop learning English** - Some newcomers believe the following: once I am hired by an employer, it means my English is good enough for that job. This is not true - many newcomers are hired without enough English, and their employers expect them to continue learning English. Some newcomers believe that some jobs don't need good English skills. They think that you only need to use your body or strength in some jobs, not your voice. There are no jobs like that in Canada. In every job you need to communicate with people. Cleaners in hospitals need to talk to patients in the rooms they clean. Construction workers need to participate in safety training and talk to sub-trades. Workers in manufacturing talk to supervisors and coworkers. Most employers expect you to know this when you are hired. They hire you with the “unspoken” expectation that you want to learn. They want you to take ownership of your learning.



Main Point - The more you use English, the more respect you will get from your coworkers.

Even if your employer offers training to employees, you usually have to choose to take the training. Some training like safety is mandatory, but most other training such as English is your choice. If you need more English, your employer doesn't want to tell you. They expect you to continue learning English from your first day at work until your English is strong enough (not perfect).

2. **Choose English before your first language** - Try not to speak your first language at work. It is better to use bad English than to speak your first language at work. Employers want to hear you try to use English more than they want to use a translator to speak to you in your first language.
3. **Take your English into the rest of your life** - Use English outside of work as well. Use some English with your children. At times, they can be the best teachers. Keep both English and your first language in your family. For example, use English at the dinner table, or only upstairs, or on Saturdays. Find a place for English in your family and your children will probably be much happier to use your first language with you. Kids spend 8 hours at school in English in a Canadian education system. It can be easier for them to adapt to living in two cultures if their parents are comfortable in both languages and cultures. However, this is your choice. Every family and person is different with different needs.



Employer Expectation 3 Continue to learn English.

Many employers will hire you, even if your English skills are not perfect. Canada's working population is getting older and many workers are retiring. Canada does not have enough workers to fill all the jobs. In fact, there will be more immigration to Canada for many more years. This means that not everyone will have enough English when they start work. Your employer will expect you to continue to learn English, even after you are hired for the job.

No one at work will tell you to keep learning English. It is your choice and responsibility, but your employer will want to see your English grow. Employers will need to teach you new skills. Later, they will probably need you to teach other new employees.

The English you have now will not be enough for what you have to do next year. Every newcomer needs to work out their own plan for continuing to learn English at work. Some newcomers must go to school after work, others prefer to learn by themselves without a teacher. Some like to combine school and learning alone. You need to find the plan that is best for you. Learning is continuous in every job in the 21st century. No one will tell you to learn because you should already know it before you start work.

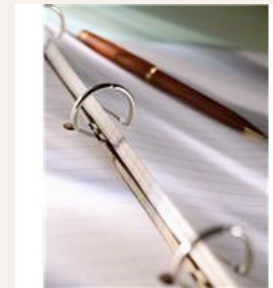
4. **Use English even when no one is listening** - Using English is not for others. English is for you and your future. You chose to live in an English-speaking country. Choose to think and speak in English whenever you can. At work, think in English, or mix English with your first language until you can use English without your first language. It might be difficult in the beginning but you can do it.
5. **Don't worry about having perfect English before you speak confidently** - You "lose face" , which means "lose respect", when you use your first language. You gain respect when you show you are trying to use English, even if it is not perfect.



BOX 3 Use a Notebook

Buy a good notebook for work. Write down everything you learn at work. Write down new vocabulary. Write down instructions for each job project. Use the notebook to learn and remember information in English. Use it to write down your ideas, goals and thoughts.

Your brain often forgets the important stuff. With a notebook, you will be able to check everything. You won't have to ask someone every time. Most people forget 70% of everything they hear within 24 hours. And then 70% of that remaining 30% within three days. Fill up a notebook instead. Use the notebook to learn English.



Strategy 4 Clear Your Pronunciation



Case Study “Viktor Finds Clear Speech”

Viktor immigrated to Canada from Eastern Europe. He had good English skills. He found a job working as a **site** supervisor for a **residential** construction company. Viktor had to **coordinate** all the construction activities at a large worksite. Most of the time, he used his cell phone to do this. But something soon went wrong. Viktor’s pronunciation of English was very difficult to understand when he spoke on the phone.

A few coworkers told Viktor’s supervisor that they had made mistakes because they didn’t understand Viktor’s **instructions**. Then a **supplier** complained. Viktor had **ordered** cement to be **delivered** at a specific time. The supplier had sent a **cement truck** full of wet cement to the construction site. But, when the truck arrived, Viktor, said the truck was too early. The work **crew** were not ready to **pour** cement. The company **invoiced** Viktor’s employer for the cement.

The supervisor told Viktor that his pronunciation was unclear. This made it difficult for his team, in other parts of the worksite, to understand him on the two-way radio. It also made the construction site unsafe. The company had a workplace language program. The supervisor suggested Viktor join the class. There were 16 other newcomers in the training. Viktor was **upset**. His English was very good. Also, he liked and wanted to keep his **accent**. He felt he was too old to change.

The instructor interviewed Viktor for the class. She identified clear speech, or pronunciation, as Viktor’s main learning need. She explained that a clear speech course didn’t have to change a newcomer’s accent. If Russian was their first language, they could always sound like a Russian speaking English. However, the course would make Viktor’s English clearer and easier to understand. Viktor took the 25 hours of training with the other newcomers. The training was not difficult. In fact, he really enjoyed it. He learnt to slow down his speaking speed. He spoke too fast in English, which made each word unclear. He needed to **pause** more between his **ideas**, especially when talking on the radio. He had to stop using unnecessary “interjections”, such as “um”, “ah”, “like”, “kinda”.

But he didn’t just **rely on** the classroom learning. He studied a pronunciation book from the library. He also used his computer to record his voice and practice clearer pronunciation. He asked for **feedback** from coworkers. Viktor needed some expert help, but the solutions and **willingness** to learn had to come from him. His instructor was helpful, but Viktor was responsible for taking his learning from the classroom into his workplace.

“Most newcomers can clear their pronunciation of English just by speaking slower. You don’t need to talk as fast as a native-English speaker. It is more important to speak clearly than perfectly.”



What does “clear your pronunciation” mean?

To clear your pronunciation means to speak clearly. For example, you can speak slower. You can pause more between ideas in a sentence. You can pronounce each sound in each word. To clear your pronunciation doesn’t mean that you lose your accent. Most people enjoy the sound of an accent. When British people come to Canada, their accent is different to Canadians or Americans. Yet, they speak clearly, meaning the use clear speech. Everyone understands them, but everyone can also hear their British accent. Keep your own accent, but clear your speech.

Main Point - Keep your accent, but clear your pronunciation so that people understand you. Speak slower. Use pause more often.”

Why speak clearly?

When you pronounce words and sentences clearly, people understand you the first time you speak. This means there are fewer misunderstandings. It is very difficult to understand a newcomer who speaks too fast or too softly.



How to speak clearly.

There are many good books on pronunciation, but they can take a long time to learn. Usually, a newcomer can speak clearly in a short time by working on the six pronunciation tips below:

<p>1. Speed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow down your speaking speed a little. You don’t have to speak fast to sound clear. No one wants you to speak fast. They want you to be clear. • If you are trying to hide your grammar mistakes by speaking fast - don’t. It is more important to have a clear message, than perfect grammar. • If the speaking speed in your first language is faster than English, slow down. You don’t have to speak at the same speed as a native speaker. • If people ask you to repeat yourself (to “say it again”), then you are probably speaking too fast. 	<p>2. Pause</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a pause between your “thought groups” in a sentence. Thought groups are the separate ideas in your sentences. • For example, let’s take the following sentence: <i>Speaking slower - and using more pause - will make your pronunciation much clearer - and easier for people to understand.</i> • Those “thought groups” above are grouped very naturally, like an English speaker. People will understand you better. 	<p>3. Interjections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid doing the following when you can’t find the correct English word: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using sounds like “um”, “ah” - saying words such as like, kinda - repeating words • These are called interjections. They make it difficult to understand a speaker. Interjections often happen when you can’t find the correct English word. You usually don’t know you are using interjections, unless someone tells you. • Instead of saying “um” “ah” etc., do the following: slow down, take a deep breath, say nothing for a moment, try a different word, say it differently. Use silence - it makes people listen to you more.
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<p>4. Stop Consonants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The letters <i>P T K B D G</i> at the end of words need to be harder and clearer in English. • Some languages don't use these sounds at the end of words. So, some speakers don't use them in English. It makes their English words sound chopped off at the end. The words sound unfinished. <p>For example: "<i>I go(t) the do(g) a bi(g) stea(k).</i>"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomers, whose first languages are one of the following, must use strong stop consonants: Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and the South-east Asian languages such as Thai and Vietnamese. 	<p>5. Multi-syllable Words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain English words are longer than the words in some other languages. They are made up of three or more syllables e.g. "house-keep-ing" or "con-struc-tion." • Some non-native speakers drop the middle syllable e.g. "keep" in "house-keep-ing". This makes their speech unclear. Speak a little slower, and pronounce the whole word. You will sound clearer. 	<p>6. Sentence Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In English, the most important words in any sentence are pronounced louder. These are the words that give the meaning in the message. If you don't stress these words a little louder, your speaking sounds flat. It is also difficult for a listener to understand your ideas. • It is similar to the telegram, before we had telephones. Only the words that gave meaning were written on the telegram. Sentence stress is the same as a telegram - emphasize the words that carry the meaning. • For example: "In <i>English</i>, the most <i>important words</i> in any sentence are pronounced <i>louder</i>."
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Enunciation

Enunciation is how you form a sound in your mouth. How you use your tongue and how wide you open your mouth. Don't talk in English with your teeth closed together. This makes it difficult to understand you. You should make sure that you form sounds in mouth properly. Open your mouth wide enough to make certain sounds in English. In some cultures, showing teeth or an open mouth are impolite. Not in English. You should enunciate your words like native-speakers.

Accent

Pronunciation is different to accent. You should keep your accent. For example, when British people come to Canada, they keep their accents. They speak in English, and everyone understands them because their speech is clear. Your accent is part of your cultural heritage. Keep it. Instead, focus on the six pronunciation tips. They can make a big difference to your speech clarity.



Employer Expectation 4 **Speak clearly before you speak perfectly.**

Most employers expect newcomers to speak clearly. They don't expect perfect English from newcomers. Also, employers are not language experts, so they usually cannot help a newcomer to speak clearly.

If English is not your first language, you should speak clearly, not quickly. If your pronunciation is clear, English speakers can understand, even if your grammar is not perfect. Focus on your pronunciation, not only your grammar. Grammar is important, but speaking clearly is very important. Using good grammar takes lots of study and practice. It can take a long time to become good at English grammar. It is easier and faster to try to speak clearly. You can keep your accent - British or Americans don't change their accents in Canada, but they still speak clearly.



BOX 4 Stop Thinking "I Must Have Perfect Grammar Before I Speak".

Myths are ideas that some people believe are true, but they are not true. These myths can control what you think you can learn or do. They might even limit your possibilities. A myth is easier to believe if a person has never experienced a different reality. One myth that stops some newcomers from learning English is that they have to speak perfect English. Many newcomers are worried about making embarrassing grammar mistakes in front of coworkers. They believe they need perfect English grammar before they can speak confidently in the workplace. They think Canadians will think badly of them if their English is not perfect. This is not true.

Good grammar is important for writing. If you are ever unsure about your grammar, ask a colleague to help you write it correctly. But, for speaking, there is more flexibility with grammar. This doesn't mean you shouldn't learn good grammar. It is better to try to speak in English than to say nothing because you are worried about making a mistake. It is very important to ask when you don't know.

In some languages, native-speakers will stop non-native speakers in mid-sentence, if they make a grammar mistake. Not in English. A Canadian will probably not correct you. In a multicultural society, citizens have to be more patient and flexible with each other. Also, colleagues are a lot more encouraging when they know a newcomer is trying hard to be better at English. Canadians usually notice a newcomer's effort, even if they don't say anything. Don't let the worry of perfect grammar stop you from speaking in English.

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Case Study “Don’t Wait”

Simon came to Canada from French-speaking West Africa. His English skills were good. He found a job doing data-entry for a large **grocery retailer**. Simon quickly learned that he needed to use his **initiative** in a team. This was very different to the workplace culture he experienced in his country of origin. Simon was used to being told what to do, doing it, and then waiting for his supervisor to give him the next task. He had never gone to his supervisor to ask for more work, or found work on his own. By the end of his first week, Simon had learned his first important lesson: if there is something that you can do without waiting for your supervisor, just do it.

This is what happened:

Each morning, his supervisor gave Simon a set of tasks to do. By the early afternoon he was finished everything. Simon sat at his desk and did nothing. His supervisor noticed this. He asked Simon if he was finished?

“Yes sir”, he replied.

“What are you doing now?”

“Waiting for you to give me more work, Mr. John,” said Simon.

His supervisor looked **puzzled**. “How long have you been sitting here?”

“For an hour, sir.”

“Well, two things you need to know Simon. First, don’t call me sir or Mr. This is not the military. I am your supervisor, not an army captain. Call me John. Second, don’t sit at your desk waiting for me to tell you what to do. If you are finished, come and find me. I am not going to be looking for you. Or, if you can find something to do without asking me, just do it. Use your own initiative.”

Simon came from a workplace culture where he was usually told what to do. He had never had to use much of his own job-planning skills. He now understood that in the Canadian workplace, supervisors put a lot of trust in their team members to use their own thinking. Simon began to **watch** and talk with team mates about using initiative. He needed to learn where he could take the initiative and when it was better to ask his supervisor. It took a few months for him to feel confident in taking initiative.

Now Simon helps other newcomer employees to know how to take initiative. Many newcomers from very **hierarchical** workplace cultures need time to learn when to take initiative and when to ask.

“I learned quickly that you need to take the initiative at work. You shouldn’t wait to be told what to do. If you can do something without your supervisor telling you, just do it. Initiate!”



What does “initiate” mean?

To initiate means to evaluate a situation or problem, and then do something about it. It means doing something without waiting for someone to tell you to do it. This is called “using your initiative”.

In the Canadian workplace, you will need to find out how much you can do by yourself (initiate), and when you need to ask (get permission) to do something. People often use initiative when they have to solve a problem, make a decision or plan a job task.

Why use initiative?

You should use initiative because your supervisor expects this from you. Most supervisors don’t have enough time to do everything in their own jobs - which means they want you to do what you can without them. They want you to be in charge of your work. Supervisors want you to figure out when to act independently, and when to ask them first. And also don’t forget, they don’t like to be called Mr. or boss. Instead, use their first names.

Main Point - Make it your goal to find out when you need to use initiative and when you need to ask your supervisor.



Employer Expectation 5 Find the limits.

A limit is the place at which you must stop. For example, a wall is the limit of a garden. In the workplace, you have limits, things you must not do. There are actions you can do, without asking your supervisor. But with some other actions, you must ask your supervisor first before you do anything.

For example, in a hospital, the housekeeping department needs to get rid of the garbage and waste from every room. A cleaner must put all the garbage into a waste cart, and then take it down to the basement. The cleaner will need to use the elevator. However, if the elevator is being used by a sick patient, the cleaner will have to wait. During a busy time, such as afternoon visitation hours, the cleaner might wait 15 or 20 minutes because the elevator is busy. Instead of wasting time, the cleaner can use his initiative by taking the waste cart to a different elevator in a less busy part of the building. The cleaner doesn’t have to ask the supervisor for permission.

However, in a different situation, the nursing staff might ask a cleaner to clean a new piece of medical equipment. If the cleaner has not learned how to clean the equipment, he should not use his initiative. He should first ask his supervisor. As a newcomer, you need to find the limits.

How to use initiative.

1. **Watch your coworkers** - The best way to know when to use your initiative is to watch your coworkers. You should observe your team mates who have worked in the company for a long time. They will usually know what to do in problem solving, decision making or job planning.
2. **Talk to coworkers** - Usually, it is better to talk with an experienced coworker first, when you don't know what to do.
3. **Assess the risks** - A risk is the possibility that something bad or dangerous could happen. If you are going to use your initiative, think about what will happen. Identify the advantages of doing it without your supervisor. Think about what bad things could happen if you don't ask. Whenever you are unsure, ask your supervisor. Then, the next time you will know what to do.
4. **Ask your supervisor** - If you are unsure what to do, and an experienced coworker can't help you, ask your supervisor. They are there to help you do your job properly. But don't keep asking the same question. After your supervisor explains everything to you, remember it. Write it down. Don't forget. A supervisor only gets frustrated when an employee keeps asking the same question, or making the same mistake.
5. **Make notes** - Write down what you learn at work. It will help you make decisions, solve problems and plan your job tasks better.



BOX 5 Gift Giving

Everyone gives and receives gifts. However, gift giving at work is different in different cultures. For example, in certain cultures, giving your supervisors a gift or inviting them to your house for dinner is normal. In Canada, it is uncommon. It is also uncommon to take your team out for a meal, and then pay for everyone. Doing your job well is more important for building good relationships. Helping others when they ask for help can build good workplace relationships.

In the Canadian workplace, there are unspoken rules for gift giving. It does depend on the kind of relationship between people. Sometimes close work friends will take turns to buy each other lunch, but often people will buy their own lunches. Turn taking between coworkers to buy coffee is common. Sometimes people can bring in "treats", like cakes, to work and leave them in the lunch room, with a note telling people to enjoy the treats. Teams often celebrate birthdays; people usually share the costs of buying a cake. They will sing happy birthday and give everyone a slice of cake.

To celebrate ethnic holidays, newcomers often bring in ethnic "treats" for coworkers to share in the celebration. At times, employees are encouraged to give small money donations or to volunteer their time for charities to help people. Be aware of the "unwritten rules" of gift giving at work.





Case Study “An Accident Waiting to Happen”

Ajay came to Canada from the South Pacific Islands. He had no formal career training, but he had worked as a shop mechanic with his uncle before immigrating. He was employed in Canada in a re-manufacturing company. His job was to **disassemble** the big wheels from the huge earthmoving trucks used in the Athabasca Oil sands. He had to clean and **repair** the wheels, and then **reassemble** everything. Each tire was worth about 40 thousand dollars and stood over 13 feet high.

Ajay worked with a **mentor** for his first few shifts. Then, his supervisor asked him to work independently. The supervisor wanted to observe Ajay, to see if he understood the job and the safety **procedures**. While his supervisor observed him, Ajay had to **hoist** the big wheel up above his head, using the **hydraulic** hoist. Ajay was nervous because he was being **assessed** by his supervisor. He felt **stressed** and began to forget what to do. A coworker interrupted the supervisor to ask a question.

Suddenly, Ajay couldn't remember which part of the tire to **take apart** first. He **unscrewed** the bolts on the **rim**. The 5, 300 kg tire was **dangling** above his head. He had unscrewed almost all the bolts when his supervisor yelled “stop!”. Ajay hadn't **secured** the **massive** tire properly. If he had unscrewed anymore bolts, the 11, 680 pounds of steel and rubber would have fallen on him and **crushed** him to death.

Ajay didn't ask his supervisor to help him because he was afraid of “losing face”. In simple language, to “lose face” means to make a mistake in front of your coworkers, and then feel embarrassed. Ajay was afraid that if he asked his supervisor, he would lose respect. He was also afraid of losing his job if he looked **incompetent** during the assessment.

However, “losing face” in the Canadian workplace are not the same as in Ajay's first culture. In Canada, you lose face if you don't ask. You get respect from asking. It shows that you want to learn and do your job correctly the first time. Ajay almost lost his life and his job. It took a long time for his team to trust him after that safety incident.

Many newcomers don't ask at work because they are afraid of losing face. As a newcomer to Canada, your supervisor expects you to ask questions. Your employer will also expect you to not keep asking the same questions. Ask, then ask for **clarification** if you still don't understand. Write down what you hear and learn so that you can go back and read it if you forget. Remember, the only stupid question is the one you don't ask.

“I was so worried about losing face at work that I almost lost my life. It is better to ask, than to worry about losing face.”



What does “ask” mean?

To ask means to say something in order to get an answer or information. If you are ever unsure about something, you must ask your supervisor or an English-speaking coworker. Some newcomers, from some cultures, don't like to ask when they don't understand. They are afraid of “losing face”, which means losing respect. They want to “save face”, and often they don't ask the right person. Instead, they try to figure everything out alone, or they ask the wrong person, like a coworker who speaks their first language.

Main Point - Don't be afraid of losing face. Ask, and try to ask once. The only dumb question is the question you ask too many times.

Why ask?

- **It's expected.** Your supervisor and coworkers expect you to ask questions, when you don't understand. You won't “lose face”. In the Canadian workplace, you only “lose face” if you ask the same question too many times. Write down the information in your notebook so that you only have to ask once.
- **To avoid mistakes.** You will only “lose face”, if you make a mistake because you didn't ask. Ask the person who has the information, not your friends from the same country or language.
- **English is not your first language.** If it is difficult to understand English, you must ask for clarification. Canadians are usually very patient if they need to explain more clearly or repeat the information. Most people will respect you if they know you ask because you want to do your job correctly.



How to seek clarification.

Always ask when you don't know something, or if you didn't understand the English. Ask for clarification whenever you are not sure. The only bad question is the question you don't ask, or the question you keep asking. Use a notebook to write down what you need to remember. Don't nod, laugh or shake your head, if someone asks if you understood. Don't use body language or eyes to suggest you didn't understand. It won't work. You need to ask clearly with your voice for the person to explain differently, to use simpler language or to repeat the information.

Strategy 6 Ask

In the following example, a safety supervisor explains to a newcomer about “the right to refuse unsafe work”. The supervisor says, “*As a worker, the Occupational Health and Safety law requires you to adhere to the health and safety rules for the job. But you also have the right to refuse unsafe work.*” The newcomer didn’t understand, so he uses the tips below for getting clarification.

Tips to get Clarification	Try using these English words
1. Tell the person what you did understand, using their words.	“I understand that I can refuse unsafe work ...”
2. Ask the person to explain again what you didn’t understand.	“... but what did you say before that?”
the supervisor’s response	“I said you need to adhere to the health and safety rules for the job.”
3. Ask the person to use simpler language, if it was too difficult.	“I still don’t understand. Could you explain what adhere means? ”
the supervisor’s response	“Adhere means to obey or follow. It means doing something because it is the rule or law.”
4. Ask the person to speak slowly and clearly, if you still don’t understand.	“Could you speak a little slower? My English is not very strong yet.”
the supervisor’s response	“Sure. Adhere means to do something because it is a rule.”
5. Repeat it back to the person to check accuracy.	“So adhere means to follow the rules for safety.’
6. Write it down if you need to.	“Thanks. I want to write that new word down so I don’t forget it.”
7. Thank the person for their patience.	“Thanks for being patient. It really helped me to understand quickly.”



Employer Expectation 6 Build credibility the Canadian way

Your credibility is the respect and trust you have from your coworkers. Through your credibility, you have a certain amount of power (influence, control and responsibility) in various workplace situations. Different cultures, and various occupations, have different ways of building credibility.

For some cultures, credibility comes through a job title like doctor, or a position like manager. For others, credibility comes through education, experience, age, money, family name or other things like religion, politics or social class. In the Canadian workplace, credibility comes mostly through doing a good job and working well with others. We could say that doing good job and working well with others is expected in every culture. However, in the Canadian workplace job title, position, age, money, family name or other things like religion, gender, politics or social class do not give credibility. Education and experience are important in order to get a job. But after you get a job, the skills listed below are the most important for credibility:

1. Do your job really well.
2. Do your job better than what people expect.
3. Talk and act kindly to other people, even when they don't.
4. Show you are a learner.
5. Be flexible and open to change.
6. Have good English and communication skills.
7. Speak clearly and respectfully.
8. Show a positive attitude to difficulties.



BOX 6 Face Saving

Saving face means to avoid embarrassment. Saving face is done to protect a person's reputation. For example, some people won't ask a question when they don't understand. They think they will look stupid in front of their coworkers, if they show they don't understand. Everyone has had this feeling before.

In some cultures, it is very important to hide that you don't understand. However, in the Canadian workplace, it is very important to ask when you don't understand. It is important to show that you do understand by explaining what you have heard or what you are going to do. It is more important to avoid mistakes than to pretend you do understand. You need to ask the right person, so that you can avoid making mistakes in your job. In the Canadian workplace, many newcomers "lose face" with their supervisors and coworkers because they don't ask. The rules about "face saving" are not the same in Canada as in many other cultures.

If you are worried about "losing face", you need to practice asking for clarification. Ask until you feel it is normal to ask. Remember to write down what you are told so that you don't have to keep asking.



Case Study “A Cultural Mistake becomes an IT Mistake”

Cheng worked as an electrician in Asia. When he came to Canada, he went to school to **upgrade** his skills. He wanted to work with computer software for electrical companies. An electrical engineering company employed him on a short three-month **contract**, as a software advisor in their **IT department**.

A month into the job, Cheng was put on an exciting new project. The company wanted to change their computers from **PCs** to Apple iMac computers. Cheng’s **role** was to **advise** the team about how the change **process** might affect their other **computer software**, such as their accounting tools and programs.

During a meeting with the company’s **regular** software **supplier**, the **sales rep** offered them a **discount** on a set of new **project management** software. Cheng’s supervisor decided to **purchase** it and upgrade their software. He didn’t ask Cheng for advice. Cheng said nothing. The **vendor** had offered them a good price on this new upgrade. Cheng smiled at the vendor and his at supervisor. Unfortunately, the upgraded software was not **compatible** with the new iMacs. The company lost thousands of dollars on useless software.

Instead of **speaking up**, Cheng said nothing in the meeting. He should have told his supervisor to check if the new software was compatible with the iMacs. The supervisor asked Cheng why he didn’t speak up. Cheng replied, “Because you are the boss.”

“You should have told me,” said the supervisor.

“I did,” said Cheng, “when I smiled at you. I was telling you not to buy the software.”

“People don’t communicate like that in the Canadian workplace,” said the supervisor. “You do need to be polite, but also clear and direct with me.”

If Cheng was worried about **embarrassing** his supervisor, he should have made a **suggestion**, like “**Perhaps**, we could first test the software compatibility with our new iMacs.” Cheng’s short contract with the company came to an end. He was not rehired. Why didn’t Cheng speak up? To speak up means to disagree with someone, or to share your ideas. In Cheng’s culture, an employee rarely disagrees openly with a supervisor. It causes the supervisor to “**lose face**”. Also, Cheng came from a workplace culture where supervisors are **supposed to** have better technical skills than their teams.

In Canada, supervisors are supposed to have better leaderships skills. They don’t need better technical skills. Cheng was hired to give his expert advice, not to **take orders** from a supervisor. His supervisor needed his help, not his silence, or **indirect communication**.

“Speak up when you know your team is making a mistake. I learned this the hard way. I lost my credibility with my team. It was too late to speak up.”



What does “speak up” mean?

To speak up means to:

- disagree with someone
- give your opinions
- share your ideas

To speak up respectfully, you need to use the correct words with coworkers and supervisors. Many newcomers don't know how to speak up respectfully. You need to learn how to speak up.

Why speak up?

- **You are paid to speak up.** You are paid for your skills and for your ideas. Your supervisor doesn't have all the solutions to problems. You are paid to contribute ideas and to speak up when you disagree.
- **Your credibility comes from speaking up respectfully.** When you speak up or share ideas respectfully, your coworkers will respect you. When you say nothing, people think you don't understand, you don't care, or you are too shy.
- **Your team expects you to speak up.** In the Canadian workplace, people can disagree with each other in a straightforward and respectful way.

Main Point - You can disagree with others. You need to share your ideas with your team. Do it respectfully, using the right English words, and be clear.



Employer Expectation 7 Be straightforward and respectful.






To be straightforward means to say exactly what you want to say. You don't hide your real thoughts. But to do this, you need to choose respectful words. Your employer expects you to speak up. Your coworkers need you to be straightforward, but respectful.

Read through the examples of how to be speak up on the following page.

Strategy 7 Speak Up

How to speak up.

Speaking up requires a very careful use of specific English words. It is not difficult. In the example below, two workers are working in a building. Other workers are using very loud power equipment in the next room, but neither men have earplugs. Read Column A - the speaking examples are the best way to speak to a coworker. Then Read Column B - the speaking example are not a good way for everyday communication. Column B is only used in emergencies, and when there is danger or a serious safety hazard.

Column A		Column B
Speak like this first		Use this way of speaking in emergencies
<p>Suggestion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think one of us <i>should perhaps</i> go back to the toolbox to get earplugs.” • “<i>How about</i> one of us goes back to the toolbox to get earplugs?” • “<i>What do you think about</i> one of us going back to the toolbox to get earplugs?” 		<p>Opinion</p> <p>“I think one of us <i>must</i> go back to the toolbox and get earplugs.”</p>
<p>Disagree</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am <i>not sure</i> we have to. We are not going to be working here for very long.” • “We <i>probably don't need</i> the earplugs. We are not going to work here very long.” 		<p>Argue</p> <p>“We don't have to. It is a waste of time, and we are not going to be working here very long.”</p>
<p>Request</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>Would you mind</i> going back to the tool box to get us some earplugs? If you don't want to, I will go.” • “<i>Could you</i> go back to the toolbox and get us some earplugs.” 		<p>Tell</p> <p>“You <i>need to</i> go and get some earplugs for us.”</p>
<p>Saying No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I <i>would prefer</i> to just get the job done and go. It is a long walk back to the toolbox.” • “I <i>tell you what</i> - next time we will remember. I <i>don't really want to</i> walk back.” 		<p>Saying No</p> <p>“No. Let's just get the job done and go.”</p>
<p>Correct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Well, I will walk back. I want both of us to work safe with the proper PPE” (personal protective equipment). 		<p>Criticize</p> <p>“You are working unsafe. I have the right to refuse to work in an unsafe way. I will go back.”</p>



BOX 7 Silence and Noise

Every workplace has a noise level for human communication. Listen for it. Notice how loud people speak and adapt your own loudness.

In a few cultures, it is important to speak loudly so that people don't think you are talking about them. In some cultures people talk loudly to include others in the conversation. In other cultures, shouting at others from a distance is rude. Some languages are spoken more softly than others. Listen to find the right volume level and adjust your voice for your Canadian workplace.





Case Study “An Experience in Belonging”

Pablo immigrated to Canada from Central America. He found work in a construction company. It was a good job with a good **salary**. He also joined a **community association** of other Spanish-speaking newcomers. The community met together often to share a meal, **talk about** their new lives in Canada, and speak in their first language, Spanish. However, at work, Pablo felt like he didn't **belong**.

The company was large, with about 250 employees. Pablo knew the people on his team, but not very well. He often felt very “alone” in the company. People usually walked past him, without even saying hello. When they did say “How are you doing”, they never stopped to listen to his reply. In Pablo's culture, this behavior is very impolite. He thought the people in his company were very **unsociable**. In his culture, employees always got to know each other really well. Everybody knew what was happening in each others' lives. After a few months, Pablo began to feel very **homesick**. When he met with his Spanish-speaking community on the weekends, he started to **criticize** his Canadian workplace. He wished he had never come to Canada.

Then Pablo met Phillip, a Canadian coworker. He spoke Spanish and had lived and worked in South America before. Phillip had a lot of **cultural intelligence**. They spent many hours talking about Canadian culture and Central American culture.

“How are you doing”

The first thing Phillip explained to Pablo was the Canadian question, “How are you doing”. He explained why most coworkers never stopped to listen to Pablo's reply. “*How are you doing* is not a question”, Phillip said. “It is just a **greeting**, like hello. Coworkers are not being **rude**. You are **misunderstanding** them.” Phillip also explained that for other cultures, like some Europeans, it is even more **impolite** to greet or talk to people that one doesn't know well. Some Western Europeans feel that the Canadian “How are you doing” is “**none of their business**”. They think that if you don't know a coworker, you don't need to say hello. You will get to know them later, perhaps by working together on a project. They think it is better to walk past a stranger without making eye contact or greeting them.

On the other hand, Canadians feel it is important to **acknowledge** a person by saying hello. Canadian will usually smile as well. For some Eastern Europeans, this is crazy. Only crazy people smile at strangers. Phillip explained to Pablo, that differences like eye contact, greetings, smiles and touch, might seem unimportant. However, they are very important; they explain how people belong together at work.

“You cannot expect coworkers to make you feel welcome if you stay on the outside of the workplace culture. You need to participate to feel like you belong.”



Case Study continued...

Pablo needed to adapt to the Canadian workplace. He also needed to know that other newcomer-coworkers, from other cultures, might have different ways of building relationships. He needed to **take notice** of their cultural behaviors. If he didn't understand, he had to ask them questions, **respectfully**.

Talking versus “doing stuff” together

Pablo began to understand that the way people from various cultures belong can be very different. For some cultures, it is through talking. For others, it is through “doing stuff” together, which means doing activities together. Some cultures belong more by **socializing**, others through doing things. In Pablo's culture, people are more open with coworkers about their personal lives. They spend a lot of time talking and socializing at work. They spend time together outside work.

In Canada, colleagues share less of their personal lives, and spend more time on their work. Also, they tend to spend less time together outside work. However, in the Canadian workplace, people do connect with each other through doing work together.

Phillip showed Pablo many ways to get to know coworkers better. “You need to adapt” he said. “You need to find out how your coworkers build relationships in this culture. You can't expect them to do it like people do in your first culture. For example, you could volunteer.” Pablo didn't really know what Phillip was talking about. In the Canadian workplace, there are different ways to volunteer, which means to give your time for free to help someone.

Pablo joined the United Way **campaign** at work. The United Way is a **charity** that **raises money** in workplaces, to help people. Pablo immediately began to “do stuff” with new coworkers from other **departments**. By doing activities with new people, he made some new friends at work, both Canadians and newcomers. Pablo also **signed up** to be a **mentor** for other newcomers. He also participated in workplace socials, such as the company BBQ in the summer. He helped plan and set up the BBQ equipment, and got to know more coworkers.

Pablo realized that to feel like he belonged in the Canadian workplace, he had to take notice of how his coworkers built relationships. Culturally, Pablo still felt like a person from Central America. But he now understood Canadian culture better. He could adapt to his new culture without criticizing it. His new culture was becoming his “home away from home.”

“If you want to belong in the workplace, you need to get more cultural intelligence, and then adapt. You need to make the effort to participate. Don't wait for people to ask you.”



What does “participate” mean?

To participate at work means to be involved in the social part of work. It means getting to know coworkers. It also means building a shared history with coworkers by doing work together.

Why participate?

Participation is the main way to feel like you belong to a group of people, not just an organization. The need to belong is a basic human need, just like food, water, love and safety. You may belong to a large ethnic community in Canada. You might be able to speak your first language with that community of newcomers. However, you did immigrate to Canada. You need a Canadian community as well, so that you can feel closer to your new home country.

How to participate.

Read and use the following ways to participate more at work:

1. Use only English at work.
2. Spend coffee and lunch breaks with different kinds of coworkers.
3. Ask when you don't know.
4. Contribute your skills and ideas at meetings.
5. Socialize in English with same-language colleagues.
6. Participate in at least a few social events at work.

Main Point - There are always opportunities to get more involved with your organization and team. It is the best way to get to know people and to feel like you belong.



Employer Expectation 8 Integrate

Your employer expects you to integrate into the workplace. Integration is the experience newcomers have of learning and then adapting to a new workplace. Newcomers usually need to build their English and learn about the Canadian ways of communicating. They also have to understand the Canadian workplace culture, such as time, hierarchy (power) and belonging. Newcomers adapt to this new workplace, which means they don't lose their first culture. Instead, they add Canadian culture as another way of acting, not the only way.

Belonging in the workplace is an important part of integration into Canadian society. Yet, some newcomers try to be “invisible” in the workplace. They avoid speaking English. Instead, they speak their first language to coworkers from the same first language, in the workplace. They worry about making grammar mistakes in English. They worry that English speakers won't understand them. They rarely start a conversation with a Canadian. They say nothing when others are talking. This should not be you. Don't be worried about making mistakes. Your goal should be to grow in your English, cultural and communication skills in your new home country. Integrate, don't be invisible.



BOX 8 Personal Grooming and Other Things No One Talks About

Breath, body odor (how the body/clothes smell), and personal grooming (hair, nails etc.) are really sensitive topics to talk to people about in the workplace. Sometimes employees are not aware that one of these sensitive topics is making another coworker feel uncomfortable. The suggestions that follow may not apply to you, but be aware of them. It might be the first and last time you read or hear about them.

If you eat lots of garlic in your food, then brush your teeth regularly at work. If you are meeting with people, chew gum (with your mouth closed) or use mouthwash. Also, know that strong smells like garlic can escape through your skin. Not everyone enjoys this smell in the workplace. Coworkers may avoid you because of this. If you cook with strong spices at home, close the doors to your bedroom and closets to prevent the smell from going into the clothes you wear to work.

Also, don't use too much perfume or deodorant. A number of people are allergic to these smells. They get headaches or even feel nauseous. Just try to smell neutral. If you do get bad breath easily, or have strong body odor, do more internet searches for how to change this. These are sensitive topics to talk about but they are important for everyone to know.

Personal grooming relates to things like keeping fingernails clean and short, shaving, keeping beards neat, having regular haircuts, ironing clothes etc. These are especially important if you work with clients, customers or with the public. You may think this is obvious, but sometimes cultural or personal experiences can shape our habits. Take note of these things in your workplace. Observe the habits of your coworkers. Every workplace is slightly different for what is acceptable, but these generalizations can help: keep fingernails short and clean; shave or keep your facial hair tidy; keep your hair clean and tidy; and iron the clothes that people see on you.

All of these suggestions come out of personal experience or from other newcomers. They are in no way directed at any culture, gender or person. They are given as one newcomer to another newcomer.



Strategies to Work With Other Cultures



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Case Study “A New Kind of Supervisor”

John came to Canada from a workplace culture where women were never in leadership roles. Unfortunately, in his background, people were also often **judged** by their political views, religion, skin color, **ethnicity**, **social class**, **economic status** or other personal choices. In fact, John had never worked on a team with a woman before. He had also never been supervised by a person with a different ethnicity and skin color to him. John's first few months in the Canadian workplace changed him.

John found a job through an iron workers union. His supervisor was a woman from a different ethnicity to John. On the first day of work, she introduced herself. She reached out to shake John's hand. John just stood there. In his religion, a man didn't touch a woman outside of his family. It was a very **awkward moment**. John had never thought about what to do in **situations** like this. Instead of smiling, and then explaining to her, he just walked away. She thought he was being rude.

John knew Canada was going to be culturally different to his first culture. He was ready to change certain attitudes and behaviors. However, he had not thought about what he would and wouldn't change. The situation became worse. John had never worked with a woman. He felt awkward. He didn't know what was **appropriate** or **inappropriate**. He didn't know what English words were correct to use with a supervisor. John kept on **avoiding** her.

The supervisor thought that John **discriminated** against her because she was a woman. Unknown to her, John wanted to talk to her, and be **respectful**. Unknown to John, she thought he didn't respect her. Eventually, John was called into their manager's office. The manager said to John that the team had noticed he was avoiding his supervisor. If this was because she was a woman, it would be defined as **workplace harassment**.

Fortunately, John didn't get **offended**. In fact, he **apologized**. He explained that he had never worked with women. In fact, he had never even shook hands with a woman before. He had also never worked in a such a multi-cultural workplace. He said that sometimes he didn't know what was right or wrong behavior. He explained that he didn't want to offend anyone, especially his supervisor.

“For me, respect in the workplace was a surprise. I thought I respected everyone. After a few weeks at work, I realized I didn't. I now believe that every human being deserves the same rights and opportunities as me. It doesn't matter who they are. Respect in the workplace in Canada changed my thinking.”



Case Study “A New Kind of Supervisor”

She quickly said she was also sorry for **misunderstanding** him. She never realized that him not shaking hands with her was for personal religious **convictions**.

The manager explained to John that in Canada, all employees had a right to practice their religious beliefs. He also said that employees rarely talk about religion and politics at work. These personal beliefs are only shared with close friends.

Employers are required to **accommodate** religious **customs** such as prayer or time off work for religious celebrations and holidays. Accommodation only works if it doesn't cause “**unfair** difficulties” for the business e.g. **financial** loss, **unmanageable workforce disruption** or health and safety problems. Every situation is different. However, most employers will try to accommodate religious **practices** for employees e.g. giving a vacation day for a specific cultural or religious holiday.

In the end, John didn't have to shake his supervisors hand. The employer wanted to respect John's religious beliefs. But John was also willing to change his opinion about people that were different to him. He respected all people. He didn't agree with everything in Canadian culture, but he learnt to respect other people's political views, religious and other personal choices.

As a newcomer, remember that everyone in the workplace is equal. Also, it is **up to** you to ask for any religious or other accommodations that you need from your employer.

“As John's supervisor, I was really uncomfortable with his behavior. I thought he was not showing respect. That he believed a woman shouldn't be a supervisor. Now I know he was also uncomfortable because it was a new experience for him. he didn't know how to act or what to say. It is always better to talk about issues than to hide them away. I wish John had told me or another supervisor what he was feeling. Someone could have helped him to earlier. We could have avoided all those bad feelings at the beginning.”



What does “respect difference” mean?

To respect difference in the workplace means to know that everyone is equal, yet different. It means everyone deserves respect when we talk to them and about them. It doesn't mean that everyone has to agree about everything. It does mean that we value coworkers because they are human beings, not because of their race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, education, economic position, or any other fact.

Main Point - Know that everyone needs to grow in their respect for others.



Why respect difference?

Respecting others is a Canadian value. The reason newcomers can come to Canada and have life, liberty, safety, pursue their dreams, and have equal opportunities is because “respect in the workplace” is so important to Canadians.

How to practice respect in the workplace.

Show respect in the workplace through the following three habits:

- **Don't judge others.** In Box 2.1 (Tip#2), you learned how to understand other people.
- **Use the common language of English.** In Tip#3, you understood the importance of using only English at work. You need to use a language that everyone understands, so that trust can grow between people.
- **Be curious.** Curiosity is a strong desire to learn and understand. Get to know coworkers. Ask them about their cultures. Find out what work is like in their first countries. Be a person who wants to learn and understand.



Employer Expectation 9

Avoid talking about religion, politics or money.

Religion is a part of life. However, in the workplace, your personal religious, financial and political beliefs are kept mostly private. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects each person's right to religious expression. However, it is also our responsibility to avoid conflict over religion, politics and money.

It is too easy to have an argument with others about these topics, especially if they disagree with you. At the same time, employers need to accommodate employees' religious customs such as prayer or time off for religious celebrations and holidays. However, the accommodation must not cause “undue hardship” for the business i.e. financial loss, unmanageable workforce disruption, or health and safety concerns.



BOX 9 Gesture. Touch. Space.

Two employees were talking during a coffee break in a training workshop. One was from the Africa. He kept touching the guy from Asia on the arm as he talked. The Asian guy kept taking a step back to find his personal space again. The Africa guy took a step forward. They “danced” from one side of the room to the other during the coffee break. Neither of them said to the other what was wrong. They didn’t realize cultural difference was the music they were dancing to.

Gesture, (how we use our bodies to talk), how we smile, physically interact with people, make eye contact or even laugh are mostly culturally defined. Canadians are often quick to smile, even to strangers. In some European cultures, if you smile at a stranger on the street, they will think you are crazy. One Asian culture has 13 different kinds of smiles, and each smile has a different meaning. Personal space and touch are also cultural habits. Gesture, touch and space are building blocks of culture.





Case Study “Getting too Personal?”

Angeline came to Canada from South America. She found a job working in **housekeeping** in a **nursing home**. In her job, she had to clean the patients’ rooms and **medical** equipment. The job tasks were very easy to learn.

After her workplace **orientation**, Angeline worked with a **mentor** called Fillipa. On day one, Angeline watched her clean a patient’s room in the nursing unit. On day two, Angeline had to help Fillipa clean. On day three, Fillipa watched to make sure Angeline cleaned properly on her own. Within a week, Angeline had her own housekeeping duties, working **independently** on a **floor** in the building.

Angeline had a very friendly personality. In her cultural background, most people are very **sociable**. Her English skills were okay. She liked to talk to people and didn’t care if her grammar wasn’t perfect. Angeline talked to everybody in the nursing home - coworkers, nurses, doctors, visitors and patients - and she talked a lot, very loudly.

At the end of her **probation** period (one month), Angeline’s supervisor called her to do a **performance review**. Angeline was shocked to find out that a few people in the hospital had **complained** about her. She was certain she cleaned the rooms and equipment **properly**. But cleaning was not the complaint. The complaints were about her interaction with people. She talked too much to patients. She had even offered medical advice to one patient.

Angeline asked her supervisor if she was going to fire her. Her supervisor laughed and said no, that many other patients had said Angeline’s friendliness **cheered them up**. Her supervisor, explained that she didn’t need to stop being friendly; rather, she needed to know how not to **cross the line**, which means to know what behaviors are okay and which are not okay. Angeline felt a little better. Her supervisor explained that learning was part of any job. She needed to adapt her communication style. Her supervisor said she needed to be more **sensitive** to noise levels in the hospital. At different times, patients were sleeping. She needed to talk softer.

She also needed to focus on what was most important. Angeline **tended to** talk about many things that were not important to her work duties. For Angeline, adapting to workplace culture didn’t mean losing her culture. Instead, it meant changing a few cultural behaviors that were really important to the people she worked with.

“I am a very friendly person. I like talking to people about everything. But in my workplace, I learned I need to think before I speak. Not everyone needs to know everything about me.”



What does “adapt your communication” mean?

To adapt means to change. You need to adapt your communication to the workplace. Most Canadian workplaces use a clear, coherent and concise communication style. Communication is more than just speaking English. Communication is how you use the English you know.

Main Point - Good communicators adapt their speaking to the listener.

Why adapt your communication?

- Good communicators adapt their speaking to the listener. The way you speak to people from your first culture in your first language might not be the same as the way to speak with Canadians or coworkers from other cultures.
- Communication styles are very different between cultures. Canadians have a very specific way to communicate at work. It may be very different from your first language and culture. It might be mostly the same. You need to know what differences to look for, and how to adapt your communication.



How to adapt your communication.

- Be clear.
- Be coherent.
- Be concise.

Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the simplest words. • Use simple sentences.
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize your ideas into specific points. • Put the most important point at the front. • Use transition words, such as first-next-last, to go from one point to the next.
Conciseness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to the main point quickly. • Take out the unnecessary words. • Talk for the same amount of time as your coworkers.

Take notice of the following parts of communication, and adapt yourself:

- how much **emotion** your coworkers put into their voices when they speak.
- how much **personal information** your colleagues share with people.
- how **direct** people are when they give their opinions and ideas.
- how **loud** they talk.
- what kind of **body language** they use, such as eye contact, touch and personal space, and smiles.



Employer Expectation 10 **Give good updates**

Updates are short talks about your work. People give an update during a meeting with their team and/or supervisor. Employers will expect you to give good updates on your work.

You will need to explain what you are doing for work, and what is and isn't finished. You may need to talk about problems, such as broken equipment. There may be changes that your team needs to know about. Updates could also include your suggestions about how to do something better (more effectively) or quicker (more efficiently). You should let your team and/or supervisor know during the meeting about your suggestions. If there is no time to do this, then do it after the meeting with your supervisor.

Listen to the updates that your coworkers give. Try to use the same amount of time, or less time. But make sure you tell your team everything they need to know from you. Keep a notebook with you to write down anything that you need to tell your team mates. Use the notes, in your notebook, to help you give good updates.



Strategy 10 Adapt Your Communication

Giving Updates - There is an easy way to create a quick update, using your workplace notebook. You need to answer three basic questions.

- If I have only 3 seconds to explain to my team, what will I say?
- If I have another 30 seconds, what should I say to support my main point?
- If I have an extra 3 minutes, what else does my team need to know?

Read Angeline’s update that she gives to her team in the housekeeping department of the nursing home. She uses the three questions to create a quick written outline first, in her notebook. Then she gives her oral update.

Questions	<i>Quick Outline</i>	The Oral Update
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I have only 3 seconds to explain to my team, what will I say? 	<p><i>Main Point</i> New bed in room 212 -</p>	<p>“Well, everything is good in my work. I only have one update for everyone to know about. There is a new bed in room 212.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I have another 30 seconds, what should I say to support my main point? 	<p><i>Supporting Points</i> 1) foot pedal on the old bed was broken 2) the new bed has a hand-held remote, not foot pedals</p>	<p>“The room has a new bed because the foot pedal on the old bed was broken. The bed wasn’t able to go up or down. The new bed has a hand-held remote control to adjust the bed.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I have an extra 3 minutes, what else does my team need to know? 	<p><i>What Else?</i> 1) Will all the rooms get new beds? - easier to clean.</p>	<p>“I think this is important for the team to know because I heard that all the rooms will get new beds this year. The bed is easier to clean.”</p>



Case Study “How to Supervise”

Habib came from Central Asia to Canada. He was a supervisor in his first country, but was unable to find similar work in Canada. So, he joined a language-training program at a college. The program was designed to help him get back into his career. Six months later, he was put into a **work placement** as a junior supervisor in a company.

The instructors in the language program were happy for him. Habib was one of the best students. He was expected to **succeed**. However, after a month, the company suddenly **terminated** his work placement. One instructor phoned the company to find out why. The manager, who had supervised Habib, explained the reasons.

Habib was too **directive** with his **subordinates**. This is also called being “**bossy**”. Habib kept telling subordinates what to do, instead of first asking them. He used sentences like “Get the **equipment**”, instead of “Could you get the equipment” or “Would you mind getting the equipment”.

Also, Habib was always watching his team. He wanted to make sure they did their job correctly. However, his team did not want to be watched. His team wanted to be trusted to work without his **constant supervision**. Habib was **micro-managing** them, which means he was always telling them “what to do” and “how to do it”, instead of trusting them to ask him if they needed his help. He sounded very “bossy”.

In the Canadian workplace, Habib needed to be more **persuasive** with coworkers, not directive or bossy. He needed to ask, **suggest**, help, **equip**, and give the power to his team, not control them. In Habib’s first culture, supervisors are **all-powerful**. They make every decision, and their subordinates wait to be told what to do. Habib did not realize he needed to behave in a different cultural way in the Canadian workplace.

In the Canadian workplace, a supervisor is responsible for a project’s success. However, the supervisor must **empower** and trust employees to work independently as well. A supervisor **guides**, **mentors**, **resolves conflict**, and **supports** the team whenever necessary. It also means that team members must use **initiative** and not depend on their supervisor to micro-manage them. Newcomers need to understand how power works in the Canadian workplace.

“I learned that a supervisor is not my boss. He or she is my helper, and I am his or her helper. We work together to get the job done.”



What does “understand power” mean?

Power at work is “influence, decision making and responsibility”. Power is how much control you have at work. Power can be very different between cultures. Most people think that leaders have the power, but all employees have power in the Canadian workplace.



Why understand power?

- **Cultural differences affect power.** Power can be very different between workplace cultures. Some cultures have a strong hierarchy in the workplace. Hierarchy is the levels of power from employee up to supervisor, and then up to the senior leadership team in the company. In some cultures, leaders have all the power; employees make very few decisions and have no influence. However, in the Canadian workplace, both supervisors and employees have power to help make decisions and to have some influence on what happens at work.
- **The supervisor-subordinate relationship is different.** Canadian supervisors are part of a team of employees. Subordinates are the people that the supervisor is responsible for. Supervisors want to be helpers. They want to support employees, instead of telling them what to do all the time. This means that employees have to ask more questions (Strategy#5), initiate (Strategy #6), and speak up (Strategy #7).

Main Point - Supervisors don't like to be the “boss”. They like to help you as you help them and your team to do your jobs well.

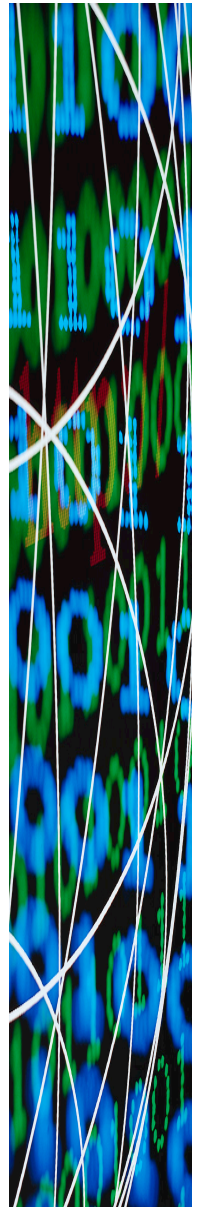
How to understand power in the Canadian workplace.

All employees have the following power in the workplace:

1. **Power to ask.** As explained in Strategy #5, all employees have the power to ask questions. Everyone, including newcomers, needs to make sure they understand everything so that they can work safely, effectively and efficiently.
2. **Power to speak up.** Everyone has the power to speak up, as explained in Strategy #6. You need to speak up if you don't agree with something, if you think a job is unsafe, or if you have an idea for your team or partner.
3. **Power to initiate.** Strategy #7 gave you the suggestion to learn when to use your initiative.
4. **Power to learn.** Your employer expects you to want to learn and grow in your job.
5. **Power to help.** The best way to show respect to supervisors is to help them help you. Take ownership of your work, your learning and your career development whenever possible. Learn quickly. Don't sit waiting for instructions. Take the initiative. Help coworkers by helping yourself to become better.
6. **Power to build your credibility.** Build your credibility with your team, as explained in Employer Expectation #6 (Strategy#6).

How to Work with a Canadian Supervisor

1. **Work with, not under, a supervisor.** The supervisor-subordinate relationships can be very different between workplace cultures. Some cultures have a very clear hierarchy in the workplace - the subordinate is under the supervisor. The supervisor controls the subordinate. In the Canadian workplace, employees are not under their supervisors. Instead, employees and supervisors work together to get things done. Supervisors have different responsibilities to subordinates, but the subordinate's responsibilities are just as important as the supervisor's job.
2. **Use first names, not titles.** Supervisors don't like being called "boss". They want to be called by their first names. Supervisors don't like to be called Mr. or Mrs., Sir or Madam. Using these formal titles puts an uncomfortable "distance" between supervisors and their teams. Supervisors want to be working with teams, not over them.
3. **Understand what is important to your supervisor.** Every supervisor is a little different. Each supervisor likes to work a specific way. The following are usually important to your supervisor:
 - Take notice of how fast your supervisor wants your team to work. It is usually not a good idea to work any faster or slower than your team.
 - Answer your supervisor's questions clearly with enough information.
 - Always ask when you are unsure. Never walk away from your supervisor when you are not sure what he/she wants you to do. Ask!
 - If you can do something without asking your supervisor (if it is safe and low risk), do it. Don't always wait to be told what to do.
 - Be friendly with your supervisor.
 - Use English only at work, especially with same-language coworkers.





Employer Expectation 11 You should want to learn

Most employers will expect that you want to learn and grow in your career. Companies want employees who do a good job. They also like employees who want to grow with the company. You are hired for your “brains”, not just your skills and energy. Everyone is expected to learn and grow.

After the company hires you, learn to do your job really well. Do your job better than your employer expects. Also, continue to learn English, and to use only English at work.

Your supervisor will be able to tell you about the learning opportunities in the company. Choose to learn. In Canada, you have to ask. Don't wait for someone to tell you to start learning. Use the opportunities the company gives you for learning.



BOX 11 Eye Contact

The way people use eye contact can be different between cultures. In Canada, keeping eye contact with the person you are talking to is important. It shows you are listening. This includes talking with a supervisor, senior colleague or to a group of people in a meeting.

Keeping your eyes down, or not looking people in the eyes, gives the idea that you are not trustworthy, not interested, hiding something, or not confident.

You must keep eye contact, but you also need to break eye contact about every 4 or 5 seconds. Look up, or to the side, like you are remembering something. Don't stare too hard for too long into a person's eyes.



Take note of how other Canadians make eye contact. Be more aware of eye contact with coworkers from the opposite gender or from other cultures. They might use different eye contact to your first culture. The right amount of eye contact is very important for respect and trust.



Two Different Kinds of Supervisors

The table below explains two different kinds of supervisors. In the Canadian workplace, your supervisor will probably be from Column A. The kind of supervisor in Column B is sometimes necessary, such as in emergencies. But the supervisor in Column B is not very good in the Canadian workplace.

If you are used to the supervisor style in Column B, you will need to change the way you work. You will need to act more independently, instead of waiting for a supervisor to tell you what to do.

Column A Good Supervisor Everyone works together as a team	Column B Not a Good Supervisor Employees work under the supervisor
	
ASKING by using “could you” or “what do you think about...”	TELLING by using “you must”, or “go and do ...”
BUILDING AGREEMENT in a team by asking the team for ideas and opinions.	TAKING CHARGE by always deciding and telling the team what to do.
HELPING others to work independently.	POLICING team members to make sure they do their job properly.
BEING the “go to person” in knowledge and resources so that the team can get the job done.	CONTROLLING by being the person with all the power.



Case Study “Canadians Have the Time”

Bakri and Tahir came to Canada from Central Africa as refugees. They were friends and had worked as laborers in their first country. They found good jobs in the **laundry and linen industry**. Their speaking and listening skills in English were good. Their reading and writing skills were not good - they hadn't finished high school in their first country. Bakri or Tahir had no **ambitions** of getting better jobs. They came to work each day, did everything their supervisor told them to do. Both men sent money home to their mothers each month.

One day, their supervisor told them that their shifts were going from full-time to part-time. They were shocked, and wanted to know why. Their supervisor explained that the company had lost a big linen client. So, he needed to take away shifts from them.

He also said something that surprised Bakri and Tahir: “You two guys give the least **effort** on the shift. You work the slowest.”

“Everyone on the team likes us,” said Bakri and Tahir. We are easy-going. We do our job. What did we do wrong?”

“Yes, everyone likes you,” said their supervisor, “but you **hold up** the processes on the floor because you work too slowly. Also, all you do is your job. There is no effort from either of you to get better at your jobs, to **cross-train**, or to learn something new. There are other workers who want to learn. I need people who want to get better at their jobs. I don't need people who just want a paycheck at the end of the week. The workplace changes. Employees also need to want to learn and change.”

Bakri and Tahir's work hours went down from 40 hours to 25 hours per week. A few days later, Tahir had an interesting conversation with another newcomer, from Asia, in the company. He said every culture has its own “cultural clock”. Tahir agreed, “In Africa we say that Europeans have the watches, but we have the time!”

The coworker laughed, and said he had to **adjust** his internal clock. “What do you mean,” asked Tahir? I needed to work slower to stay on Canadian time. In my country, we work harder, longer, faster. But In Canada, my coworkers **complained** that I finished too quickly. This made it difficult to work with me on a team. I had to change my “cultural clock” inside of me. Soon Tahir and Bakri were more aware of their employers expectations for using their time properly. They began to work quicker. Later, the company found more clients. Tahir and Bakri were soon back to full-time shifts.

Both men joined a workplace Essential Skills training program to improve their math, writing and reading skills. They had not finished school in their first country. However, they didn't let their past stop them from changing their future. They adapted. They worked hard. They came to Canada, for a new life, for new opportunities.

“I never thought about changing my ideas about time. I never thought that people can work faster or slower.”



What does “use Canadian time” mean?

There are clocks on the wall in the workplace. However, everyone also has an “internal clock”. This “clock” is both cultural and personal. You can see this “clock” by how fast or slow people work. You can see it in how they use their time.

Every workplace has a preferred way of using time. It’s more than just punctuality, or arriving for work and meetings on time. Your “company’s clock” means the specific ways to schedule tasks, manage interruptions, talk with coworkers, and meet or extend deadlines. It even includes how long people take to explain something or give updates in a meeting. It could even be how fast you walk or work. You need to take notice of how time is used in your Canadian workplace, and adapt to it.

Why use Canadian time?

Different cultures use time differently. Some cultures say that “time is money”. Other cultures say that “time is for people”. Some people work very slowly. Other people work very quickly. Some people come to work early. Some people come to work 5 or 10 minutes late. As a newcomer, you need to know that the way the Canadian workplace uses time might be very different from your first culture. Take notice of how time is used in your new workplace, and then adapt yourself. Stay on your “company’s clock”, not your own “internal clock”.

How to use Canadian time.

- **See time.** Workers need to spend time together to talk and be friendly, but they also need enough time to complete job tasks. A workplace usually has to balance this. Watch and take note of how coworkers use their time. Ask experienced team mates about how to use your time well.
- **Compare time.** Compare the way people use time in your new workplace with your first workplace culture. Identify the differences in how to: (1) schedule tasks, (2) manage interruptions, (3) talk with coworkers, (4) meet or extend deadlines, (5) how long people take to explain something or give updates in a meeting, (6) how fast people work etc.
- **Adapt.** If you need to make any changes, such as working faster or a little slower, do it. Adapt whenever you can.

Main Point - Culture affects how people use time in the workplace. You need to understand how time is used in your new workplace.





Employer Expectation 12

Find out the important times and dates in your workplace.

Your company has important times and dates. Make sure you find out the important ones. For example:

- When does your shift start and end?
- At what time, and for how long is coffee break? How long is your job training?
- When does your probation time end?
- When do you qualify for paid vacation and benefits?
- When can you receive a pay raise?
- When is a good time to look for a promotion?
- When should you take vacation?



BOX 12 Washrooms and Other Sensibilities

No one really wants to discuss this at work, so let's talk clearly. Without disrespecting anyone, this handbook suggests that everyone does the following:

- **Sniffing and Sneezing.** Don't sniff hard and then swallow in public. Instead, blow your nose into a tissue straight away, and if possible wash your hands to prevent the spread of germs. If you cough or sneeze, try to do it into your sleeve (if you have no tissue).
- **Washing for Religious Purposes.** If you wash before prayer, work out the details of this process with your supervisor and HR department. The company should work with you to find out the best ways to accommodate this, so that it becomes part of normal washroom customs. Washing for prayer should not feel unusual and awkward to you or to your colleagues.
- **Public Washrooms.** These are places to keep clean, not just to clean yourself. This means taking the following advice:
Spit in the toilet quietly, never in the sink. Blow your nose into a facial tissue or toilet paper, never into the sink or toilet. Always flush the toilet/urinal and keep the seat clean. Wash your hands and throw the towel into the trash can. If necessary, request that a trash can be put near the washroom door to throw hand towel into, if you use it to open the door to break the bacteria chain. Make sure any female sanitary products are put in the garbage, not the toilet.

Oral Communication

Tip Sheet 1

This Workplace Essential Skills tip sheet gives practical suggestions to enhance oral communication in the workplace.

1. **Speed** - Speak slowly.

Pronounce each word clearly and fully.

2. **Emphasis** - When you speak in English, emphasize the most important words in a sentence. Say them a little louder than the other words. This makes it easier for people to understand you, and to remember the important part of the message.

3. **Volume** - Adjust your volume. You should speak more softly with one person or a small group. Speak louder to a larger group of people. Also speak loudly to people across the room. Don't shout at people if you can walk over them.

4. **Fillers** - Don't use filler words, such as "um", "ah" "uh", "like" etc. Instead, pause when you can't think of the correct word. Say nothing until you find a different word to use. A pause will make people listen more. Fillers make it hard to listen to your message.

5. **Organization** - Organize your ideas before you speak. If possible, write them down on paper. You can find the correct words to use. Then, you will be able to focus on clear pronunciation when you speak.

6. **Eye Contact** - Make eye contact with people every few seconds, when you are listening or speaking. Don't stare into their eyes all the time. Don't just stare at the ground or up into the air. Make eye contact with everyone, not just the person you are speaking to.

7. **Body Language** - Use your body language to show the speaker that you are listening e.g. nod your head, smile, use good eye contact, lean forward etc.

8. **Listening** - For better listening, focus on the speaker's message. Ignore the noises around you. Lean forward if you can't hear clearly. Ask the person to speak a little louder, if necessary.

9. **Interrupting** - Don't interrupt when someone else is talking. Wait until they finish. If you must say something, ask if you can interrupt.

10. **Asking** - Always ask when you don't understand. Ask specific questions. Ask until you understand.

11. **English Only** - Use English as much as possible at work. It is better to speak your first language outside of work.

12. **Notebook** - Use a notebook at work. Always write down what you will forget.

Oral Communication is one of the 9 Workplace Essential Skills. Workers talk with each other to share ideas and information.



Working with Partners and Teams

Tip Sheet 2

This Workplace Essential Skills tip sheet gives practical suggestions for working with others in the workplace.

1. **Speaking up** - During your work shift, you might see, do or find out something important. Ask yourself, "Does my team also need to know this?" You need to tell your team anything helps them do their job correctly and safely.

2. **Contact Information** - Give your co-workers your contact information *e.g. cell phone and home phone number etc.* Make a list of everyone's contact information and then give a copy to everyone on the team.

3. **Contributing** - At team meetings, always share your ideas and opinions with your team.

4. **Deciding** - Make decisions together with your team or work partners.

5. **Listening** - Help your team members share ideas by asking them questions. Listen to them carefully.

6. **Feedback** - Always think carefully about the feedback and advice that your team members give to you.

7. **Suggesting** - When you have a suggestion (idea), share it with your co-workers like a question. Don't say "*I think you must ask the supervisor*" Rather say, "*What about asking the supervisor first?*"

8. **Relationships** - Get to know the people you work with. Tell new team members about yourself. Get to know your co-workers by going to group activities *e.g. after work BBQ's, Christmas parties, etc.*

9. **Strengths and Weaknesses** - Know your strengths and weaknesses. You strengths are what you are good at in your job. Your weaknesses are what you are not good at doing.

10. **Team Strengths** - Know the strengths, ideas and opinions of your team members.

11. **Time Management** - Always finish your work on time.

12. **Conflict** - Always try to solve conflict and problems immediately. Don't wait until it is too late!

13. **Recognition** - Tell your co-workers when they do a good job.

14. **Helping** - Always help co-workers who need help from you at work.

15. **Workplace Respect** - Respect the feelings, opinions and values of your co-workers.

Working with Partners and Teams is part of *Working with Others*, one of the 9 Workplace Essential Skills. It means how much you need to work with, or need, other coworkers in order to do your own job. Do you work with a partner? Do you work as a member of a team?



Working Independently

Tip Sheet 3

This Workplace Essential Skills tip sheet gives practical suggestions for working with others in the workplace.

1. **Goals** - Set goals at the start of every day and every week. Only set goals that you can achieve. At the end of every day and week, check if you have achieved your goals.

2. **“To Do” List** - Make a “To Do” list every day and every week. Keep the most important work at the top of your list.

3. **Project Management** - Separate your big work projects into smaller, easier parts.

4. **Schedule** - Make a schedule. Set specific times in the day for specific work. Then, fewer people will interrupt you.

5. **Time Management** - Use your time correctly. Do the most important jobs first. Then, when co-workers need you unexpectedly, you can stop and help them.

6. **Reviewing** - Check your “To Do” list and your schedule often. Check what you have finished and what you need to finish. Make changes if you need to.

7. **Log Book** - Write down the work you finish, each day and each week, in a log book. Give the log book to your supervisor to look at. Your supervisor needs to know what work you finished, and what work you are still doing.

8. **Updating** - Give regular updates to your supervisor. Tell your supervisor the details about what is finished and what is not finished. Sometimes you need more time to finish. You must tell your supervisor as soon as possible.

9. **Initiative** - Don’t always wait for your supervisor to tell you what to do next. If you know what is next, do it. If you are unsure, ask your supervisor. Don’t wait!

10. **Impact** - Know more about a project and the company than just your own daily job. Ask your co-workers about how your work impacts their work.

11. **Friends** - Get to know people that enjoy the things you enjoy, such as hobbies and activities. Go to training with coworkers, join a group, or volunteer in the community etc.

12. **Asking** - When you don’t understand, always ask your supervisor or someone on your team. The only stupid question is the question you don’t ask.

Working Independently is part of *Working with Others*, one of the 9 Workplace Essential Skills. It means how much you need to work with, or need, other coworkers in order to do your own job. Do you work alone? Do you work independently, but with coworkers near you?



Reading

Tip Sheet 4

This Workplace Essential Skills tip sheet gives practical suggestions to improve reading for the workplace.

1. **Starting** - You first learn to read. Then you read to learn. Start reading short texts. When that is easy, start reading longer texts.

2. **Speed** - You don't need to read fast. Read to understand. Get the general meaning, focus on the words you do understand. Then, ask a coworker or use a dictionary to understand the other words.

3. **Supports** - Put your finger, or a bookmark, under the words you are reading. It will help you focus.

4. **Pronunciation** - When you don't know how to pronounce a word, ask a coworker. Write the word down like you hear it. Use an online or electronic dictionary to listen to the pronunciation.

5. **Highlighting** - Find the main points in a text. Use a colored pen to highlight the main points. Or underline them with a pencil.

6. **Purpose** - Before you start to read, ask yourself: "What do I need to know or do, after I read this text?" Then, find the information in the text to answer your question. Make notes.

7. **Notebook** - Use a vocabulary notebook to write down new words. Use a dictionary to find the meanings of new words. Ask coworkers to help you understand.

8. **In English** - Read in English. Use reading with writing to learn English. Read aloud to practice speaking clearly. Record your voice and listen to yourself.

9. **Where** - Read in a quiet place. Find a place where other people won't interrupt you.

10. **What** - Read about subjects that you enjoy. Read about topics that will help you in your job.

11. **When** - Read everywhere. Read whenever you have time. The more you read, the stronger your reading skills become.

12. **Who** - Read to your children. Read with your family. Start reading to your children when they are young. Strong reading skills begin in your home.

Reading is one of the 9 Workplace Essential Skills. Workers read sentences and paragraphs. Texts are usually notes, letters, memos, manuals, regulations, books, newspaper and magazine articles, reports or journals.



Document Use

Tip Sheet 5

This Workplace Essential Skills tip sheet gives practical suggestions to help you use documents in the workplace.

1. **Tables** - Documents are often use tables to organize information. Use your fingers or a ruler to follow information across a row, or up and down a column.

2. **Headings** - Look at the headings to find information on the document page.

3. **Scanning** - Look for big font sizes, bold text and highlighted words etc. that emphasize the important information.

4. **Symbols** - Notice special symbols, such as an asterisk (*), which might give special information.

5. **Clarity** - Write clearly so everyone can read it easily. Write in the correct space and on the line.

6. **Word Choice** - Use words that are easy to understand, when you enter information into a document.

7. **Checking** - After you finish entering information, read through everything. Check that everything you wrote is complete and accurate.

8. **Instructions** - Read instructions carefully before you fill in a form or questionnaire.

9. **Sequencing** - Sometimes you need to complete more than one document. Check which document you need to complete first. Complete each document in the correct order.

10. **Attention to Detail** - Read headings and labels carefully before entering information into a document. Make sure you write down the correct information.

11. **Shapes and Colors** - Look for common shapes and colors on a document. They will help you understand signs and symbols e.g. a diamond shape is a warning; red is danger or stop.

12. **Clarification** - Ask when you don't understand something on a document, sign or other display. The only stupid question is the question you don't ask.

Document Use is one of the 9 Workplace Essential Skills. Workers read information in words, numbers and icons. Document use is different to reading texts. This means that colors, lines and shapes are arranged in a specific way to have meaning in document use. Information, in document use, is often found inside reading texts.



Writing

Tip Sheet 6

This Workplace Essential Skills tip sheet gives practical suggestions to help you write better in the workplace.

1. Purpose - Before you start writing, decide on your purpose e.g. to explain, to persuade, to record information etc.	2. Brainstorming - First brainstorm on a separate paper. Write down all the ideas you have. Then you can organize them into a logical order before you write.	3. Clarity - Write clearly. Use words and sentences that are easy to understand. Write neatly.
4. Numbers - Write out numbers zero to nine with words e.g. eight. Use digits for numbers 10 and higher e.g. 41.	5. Punctuation - Use correct punctuation e.g. commas separate ideas or show a pause in a sentence.	6. Proofreading - Read through your writing a few times to make sure there are no spelling or grammar mistakes.
7. Highlighting - Use good formatting to highlight important information e.g. bold, italics, font size, color, underline etc.	8. Organizing - Use headings to organize your information into different sections. Make sure it is easy to see the different sections.	9. Synonyms - Don't use the same word all the time. Use a thesaurus to help you find similar words.
10. Main Ideas - Put only one main idea in each paragraph.	11. Checking - Read through your writing to check you have included all the important information.	12. Editing - Read your writing out loud. You can hear when it sounds unclear. Print it if you used a computer. It is easier to "see" your mistakes on paper. Ask someone, such as a coworker, to read your writing and give you feedback.

Writing is one of the 9 Workplace Essential Skills. Workers write texts such as notes and emails. They also fill in forms and complete other documents.



Continuous Learning for Work

Tip Sheet 7

The following AWES tip sheet gives practical suggestions for learning in the workplace.

1. **English** - Keep learning workplace English. Your speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are important now. They will be even more important in five years, in ten years etc. You need to have a plan to grow in your English. Your job success depends on your English skills.

2. **Technical** - Your technical skills are the knowledge and abilities you have to do your job. They are also called “hard” skills. They include how to use equipment, machines and tools. It also includes safety. This kind of training happens through on-the-job mentoring, manuals and workshops.

3. **Non-technical** - Your non-technical skills are also called “soft” skills. They include your ability to work with other people, control stress, manage your time and plan your job tasks. They include the ability to think, to make decisions and use initiative.

4. **Learning Styles** - Know your learning style. Is it auditory (listening/ears)? Is it visual (sight/eyes)? Is it tactile (using hands and body)? Everybody has a specific way that they like to learn. Use a learning style that makes learning enjoyable for you. You can use all three learning styles to learn certain things. Using the right learning style will make it easier to remember what you are learning.

5. **Learning Strategies** - A learning strategy is a plan for learning. It includes the “what”, the “why”, the “where” and the “how”. The YH73 Model is an easy-to-use learning strategy. **Y** is why are you learning? **H** is the hook, which means using your learning style to “hook” or catch info. **7** pieces of info is the most amount of info your brain can handle at one time before it needs a short rest. **3** means that we forget in 3 days so we need to review everything. **3** also means using all three learning styles to remember facts.

6. **Learning Abilities** - Some people think that their abilities to learn are not very strong. However, this is usually due to two reasons. First, they don’t have good learning strategies. Second, they don’t have a clear and strong motivation, or goal, for learning. Make sure you know your goals. When learning gets difficult, you will need to think again about your goals. Your goals give you the energy to keep learning, even when you want to stop.

Continuous Learning is one of the 9 Workplace Essential Skills. Workers must continue to learn in order to keep their jobs and grow in their careers. A worker needs to know how to learn; to understand his or her preferred learning style: visual (eye), auditory (ear) or kinesthetic (hands and body). A worker also needs to know how to access learning opportunities and resources.



Intercultural Skills

Tip Sheet 8

The following AWES tip sheet gives practical suggestions for developing your intercultural skills for the workplace.

1. **Communication** - Understand and practice using a Canadian style of communication, which means be clear, concise, coherent and use lots of softeners. See tip sheet #9.

2. **Face** - Understand how losing and saving “face” happens in your Canadian workplace. It may not be the same as in your first culture e.g. asking questions when you don’t understand does not mean “losing face” in Canada, but it does in some cultures.

3. **Body Language** - Be aware of the body language of people from other cultures. It may be different to what you expect e.g. some cultures use strong eye contact when talking; other cultures avoid eye contact.

4. **Space and Touch** - Be aware of how much space people need when they talk to you. They might stand close, or prefer to stand farther away. Also, some cultures touch your arm or hand when they talk to you. Canadians might shake hands, but they usually don’t touch when talking.

5. **Time** - Understand how time is used in your Canadian workplace. Cultures use time differently. For example, always try to be a few minutes early, not late. Some cultures say “time is money”; others say “time is people”. Some people like to do one task first, then the next; others like to do many activities at the same time.

6. **Power** - Don’t assume that the relationship between supervisor and subordinate is the same in your Canadian workplace, as in your first culture. The amount of power, or influence and responsibility, is different. In the Canadian workplace, the supervisor expects all team members to contribute ideas and opinions. Supervisors expect teams to disagree and to ask questions, when necessary.

7. **Suspending Judgement** - Have you ever had a cultural experience that was awkward? e.g. someone asks you a question that you think is none of their business. To suspend judgement means you don’t get angry. You don’t judge the experience right or wrong. Instead, you think about what the person’s motivations might be. It is probably not meant to be rude or awkward. A gentle or curious response from you is a better way to control the situation. Suspending judgement works.

8. **Being Curious** - Learn about the culture in your workplace. Ask people about the cultures that they come from.

9. **Adapting** - To adapt means to change and grow as a person. It requires for you to be open to new ways of thinking and behaving. It doesn’t mean that you lose the ways of thinking and behaving from your first culture. Instead, you add new ways for the Canadian workplace, without losing your first ways. You can do both. Adapting does mean thinking and behaving differently in some workplace situations. Adapting to a new culture, learning English, and developing job skills are the keys to job success.