

CURRICULUM RESOURCE

Skills for Success in the Workplace – Distribution Centres: Communication

OALCF ALIGNMENT

Competency	Task Group	Level
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A1. Read continuous text	2
Competency A -Find and Use Information	A2. Interpret documents	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B1. Interact with others	1
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B3. Complete and create documents	1

Goal Paths (check all that apply)

- Employment
- Apprenticeship
- Secondary School Credit
- Postsecondary
- Independence

Embedded Skills for Success (check all that apply)

- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity and innovation
- Digital
- Numeracy
- Problem Solving
- Reading
- Writing

NOTES: Part four of a five-part series on SFS in Distribution Centres.

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SKILLS FOR SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE: Distribution Centres

Note for practitioners:

This series of **Skills for Success Curriculum Resources** can be used as a supplement to the Material Handler resource published by Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) based on curriculum developed by Literacy Link Eastern Ontario (LLEO) in 2012 (<https://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/Warehouse-Curriculum-Jan-14-2021-FINAL.pdf>). It is not an adaptation of that material but rather an addendum focusing on five identified Skills for Success competencies: **Problem Solving, Adaptability, Creativity & Innovation, Collaboration, and Communication.**

These resources are learner-based and activity-focused, moving the learner through on-the-job scenarios they will then respond to. By participating in the activities, the learner will gain an understanding of the workplace challenges that might require them to use a given competency and its associated strategies.

Practitioners may be required to assist learners by reading the activities.

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

- Skills for Success in the Workplace: Distribution Centres – **Problem Solving**
- Skills for Success in the Workplace: Distribution Centres – **Adaptability**
- Skills for Success in the Workplace: Distribution Centres – **Collaboration**
- Skills for Success in the Workplace: Distribution Centres – **Communication**
- Skills for Success in the Workplace: Distribution Centres – **Creativity & Innovation**

*This is Section Four, Skills for Success in the Workplace: Distribution Centres –
Communication*

SFS In the Workplace: Distribution Centres Communication

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What is a Distribution Centre Job?

A distribution centre is another word for a **warehouse**.

A job in a distribution centre might mean:

- moving boxes and crates in a warehouse
- accepting products at a business
- sending products from a business
- recording the arrival and movement of products
- driving products to and from places

Work at a distribution centre is best for people who:

- enjoy physical work
- like to work with their hands
- can work on their own and as part of a team
- can follow instructions
- are well-organized

Distribution centre jobs might require you to:

- have a driver's license
- lift heavy things
- be flexible about your work hours
- be responsible for valuable items
- wear a hard hat and safety boots
- apply workplace safety standards

Examples of Distribution Centre Jobs

Many types of businesses offer distribution centre jobs. You could work as:

- a warehouse associate at an online retailer like Amazon
- a material handler at a large box store like Walmart or Costco
- a stock person in the receiving area of a grocery store like NoFrills
- a mover for a moving company
- a delivery driver for a courier company like Purolator
- a driver merchandiser for a large company like Coca-Cola
- an inventory clerk for a big retail store
- a forklift driver in the warehouse of a large company

Distribution Centre Job Tasks

Some of the tasks you might do at a distribution centre job include:

- unloading new inventory from a truck
- packing and unpacking boxes
- keeping track of incoming and outgoing inventory on a computer
- stocking shelves
- organizing inventory on warehouse shelves
- driving a truck or a forklift

Inventory is another word for the products that move to and from businesses.



What Skills Do You Need to Work in Distribution Centres?

To succeed in a distribution centre job, you need some key skills. Here are some of the skills that you will likely need:

- organizational skills
- time-management skills
- basic math skills
- basic digital skills
- adaptability
- good communication skills
- collaboration skills like teamwork
- creativity and innovation skills
- problem-solving skills

To succeed in a distribution centre job, you also need some key habits:

- clean and tidy appearance
 - politeness
 - reliability
 - being on time for work
- Many distribution centre workers have less education than a high school diploma, but many require **extra training**.
- Many distribution centre workers are men. But many more women are being attracted to distribution centre jobs.



Questionnaire: Is a Distribution Centre Job Right for You?

Are you thinking about applying for a job at a distribution centre?

Answer the following questions to find out if it's for you:

1. Do you enjoy doing physical work? Yes No
2. Do you enjoy working with your hands? Yes No
3. Can you work on your own and with a team? Yes No
4. Can you follow the instructions? Yes No
5. Can you be well-organized? Yes No
6. Are you able to lift things that weigh up to 9 kg? Yes No
7. Can you be flexible with your schedule? Yes No
8. Do you have a driver's license? Yes No
9. Can you reliably get to work on time? Yes No

- If you answered **yes** to many of these questions, this may be a suitable job for you!



What is Communication?

Communication has three main parts:

- speaking
- listening
- interacting with others

It only works when everyone understands each other. The key skills of strong communication are:

- expressing yourself clearly and politely
- paying close attention to what is being said
- interacting with others using respect, empathy, and confidence

➤ Why is good communication important at work?

Clear communication gets the job done with few mistakes. Communication helps staff know what is expected of them. It builds understanding and teamwork.

Employees with strong communication skills:

- share their ideas with co-workers and bosses
- express themselves clearly, politely, and confidently
- pay attention to instructions
- listen carefully to managers, co-workers, and customers
- are responsive and empathetic to the needs and ideas of others
- get help when they need it and help the team avoid mistakes
- get better at their job because they learn to improve!

Communication at Your Distribution Centre Job

Communication skills at a distribution centre job:

a. Communication Styles

Communicating with different people requires different communication styles. Interacting with friends and family is different from communicating on the job.

At work you should be more **formal**. That means being even more polite and respectful than normal.

You may also need to adapt your communication style to the situation.

With **bosses and managers**, you should be extra respectful and always listen carefully:

- Be confident when you speak and share your ideas.
 - Speak clearly and with enough volume.
 - Pay close attention to instructions and feedback.
 - Show that you understand by being responsive with verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Communication isn't just about what you say. There are also non-verbal cues like smiling, nodding, or giving a thumbs-up.

With **customers**, you should be responsive to their needs:

- Understand customers' concerns by listening carefully.
- Evaluate how a customer is feeling by reading non-verbal cues.
- Repeat back what a customer has said to ensure you got it right.
- Show you care using a clear response.

b. Listening to Learn

One of the most important things to do at work is **active listening**. Active listening means concentrating on what the speaker is saying. It also means asking questions when you don't understand.

Active listening at work means receiving:

- instructions about how to do your job
- feedback about how to do your job better
- updates about new rules
- information from customers
- details about deliveries and orders



When you practice active listening, you learn more. You also know to ask questions about what you don't understand. The benefits of active listening on the job are that you:

- get better at your job
- avoid confusion
- avoid conflict

Listen carefully to managers, co-workers, and customers:

- **Managers** are experts at the job. Ask them for help if you need it!
- Pay attention to **co-workers**. They are full of good ideas!
- When **customers** feel they have been listened to, they will be happy!

c. Interacting like a Pro

Interacting professionally at work is very important. To interact professionally, you should:

- speak clearly and with confidence
- listen carefully
- pay attention to non-verbal cues like frowning or smiling
- adapt your communication style to the situation
- treat others with empathy and respect
- be responsive to others using non-verbal cues like nodding

Interacting professionally also means sharing ideas. Sharing ideas is more than you saying what you think. It also involves listening to others' thoughts, ideas, and opinions.

When you share ideas you:

- help your co-workers get better
- solve problems
- get feedback from your boss

➤ And managers love to hear your ideas!

d. Communicating Problems on the Job

If you have a problem at work, you may feel upset. It is hard to communicate clearly when you are upset. But it is important to communicate if you are having problems on the job.

Reach out if you are:

- confused about your duties
- making mistakes on the job
- having problems with co-workers
- finding certain tasks challenging



If you don't communicate problems, you might:

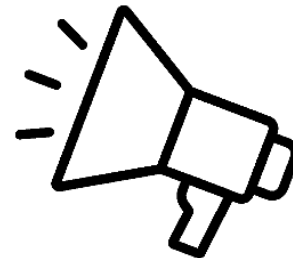
- be confused about your duties
- cause the boss to have a bad impression of you
- even get fired

Overview

Develop Communication Skills for the Workplace

Learn to improve your communication skills:

- Speak clearly and with enough volume.
- Communicate with confidence.
- Adapt your communication style to the situation.
- Share your ideas with managers and co-workers.
- Be patient and polite.



- Listen carefully.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues like smiling or frowning.
- Show that you understand by nodding or giving a thumbs-up.
- Ask questions when you don't understand.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Treat others with respect and empathy.

Activities

We will now do some activities. They will show good and bad uses of communication at work. They will also provide examples of:

- the types of jobs you might have in distribution centres
- the daily tasks you might do
- on-the-job challenges
- other key skills for success in distribution centre jobs
- dos and don'ts



You will read a scenario, think about it, and respond to some questions. Then we will review.

Activity #1

Monique has recently started working as an inventory clerk for a big retail store. She attended training on how to do inventory on a computer.

The training session was many hours long. There was a lot of information. Monique didn't understand it all.

On her first shift, her manager gives her more instructions. She didn't understand them all. She was nervous and didn't say anything. Then the manager leaves her alone to record new inventory into the computer.

Monique tries to remember how to enter inventory into the computer correctly. But she feels overwhelmed and panics.

Activity #1 (Continued)

Monique's co-workers are busy with their own work. She does not want to interrupt them. She does not want them to know that she is struggling.

But she also does not want to make mistakes on the job. She decides that she will ask her co-workers for help.

She admits to them that she is struggling. She can't understand how to record new inventory into the computer.

She asks a co-worker to help her. She asks another co-worker to get the manager. The manager comes to help and Monique admits that she was struggling and feeling stressed.

The manager shows her what she was doing wrong. Her co-worker helps her enter the new inventory. Monique takes notes, asks questions, and repeats instructions.

The manager praises Monique and her co-workers for working as a team.

Questions #1

1. List one way Monique uses communication skills.
2. What is one reason Monique does not remember how to do her job correctly?
Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. Why was it good that Monique asked her co-workers for help? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #1

1. Monique used her communication skills when:
 - she asked for help
 - she asked a co-worker to get the manager for her
 - she admitted that she was struggling and needed help

2. Monique does not remember how to do parts of her job because
 - she is new to the job
 - the training was long and involved a lot of information
 - she is under pressure and feeling stressed

➤ It can take a while to learn how to do a new job and this can be stressful.

3. By asking her co-workers for help, Monique:
 - learned how to do her job better
 - avoided making mistakes.
 - removed some stress by getting help from others
 - improved relationships and trust with her co-workers

Activity #2

Carlo has been working at a Canadian Tire for a year. His main role is stocking shelves.

Carlo knows the big store well. He has learned what products go in each section. He remembers the aisles and most of the shelves. He is proud of his knowledge.

His manager encourages all the employees to help each other on the job.

If Carlo needs help, he asks a co-worker. When Carlo sees another co-worker is struggling, he offers to help.

One day, Sarah, a new employee starts work stocking shelves. The manager trains her on the job. But on the next day, Sarah works slowly and seems confused.

Carlo knows he has knowledge that can help her.

Questions #2

1. How could Carlo use good communication to help his co-worker? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #2

1. Carlo should tell Sarah he can help if she has questions.

He should listen carefully to what Sarah needs. He should make sure Sarah understands what he has said.

He should also:

- speak clearly and with enough volume
- be polite, patient, and empathetic
- pay attention to her non-verbal cues

Carlo's manager will be pleased if he communicates well with his new co-worker.

Activity #3

Omar has been working as a mover for a moving company for two years. He does his job very well.

He greets clients politely. He asks questions about how they would like the job done. He indicates that he understands by nodding.

One day, a new person, Caleb, is hired to be a mover with the moving company.

On Caleb's first job, Omar notices that Caleb ignores the clients. Caleb does not even say hello to them. Omar notices that the clients are frowning.

Omar tells Caleb: "Please politely acknowledge the clients. Otherwise, it is rude."

Caleb says rudely: "Why? I don't work for them!"

The customers complain about Caleb to the boss. The boss is not pleased with Caleb.

Questions #3

1. Who used good communication skills? Omar Caleb
2. How did Omar use good communication skills? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. How could Caleb have used good communication skills? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #3

1. Omar used good communication skills.

Caleb did **not** use good communication skills.

2. Omar uses good communication skills when:

- he is polite to clients
- he greets the clients politely
- he asks how they would like him to do the job
- he indicates that he understands by nodding
- he pays attention to the frowns of the clients
- he politely explains what Caleb is doing wrong on the job

3. Caleb does not use good communication skills when:

- he ignores the clients
- he is rude to Omar

He should have politely said hello to the clients. He should have responded politely to Omar.

➤ New employees can learn a lot from senior employees. They should listen and be respectful.

Activity #4

Jose works as a delivery driver for a courier company. His job is to deliver packages to customers.

One day, he delivers a package to a customer's house. The customer receives the package. He complains that the box is dented. He is frowning.

Jose sees that the box is dented. But he does not believe he dented it. He doesn't listen carefully to the customer. He doesn't pay attention to non-verbal cues.

He rudely tells the customer: "That's not my problem. You will have to contact the company."

The customer is frowning even more. He wants Jose to take the package back.

But Jose is not considerate. He is not respectful. He ignores the customer and drives away.

Questions #4

1. Did Jose use good communication skills? Yes No Not sure
2. Discuss one way he could have used good communication skills.

Answers #4

1. No, Jose did **not** use good communication skills.

2. He should have:
 - been more patient
 - been more polite
 - listened carefully
 - paid attention to the customer's frowns
 - been empathetic and respectful
 - asked how he could help the customer

If he wasn't sure what to do, he could have called his manager.

His boss will be disappointed that he wasn't a good communicator.

Activity #5

Ishmael has started working at a Costco in the warehouse. The warehouse is very big. He keeps forgetting where everything goes.

His co-workers told him to ask for help if he has problems. But Ishmael is afraid to show he is struggling. He is embarrassed.

He lies to his co-workers. He tells them that he is not struggling.

He says that he does not need their help.

Since he didn't ask for help, he makes mistakes.

Questions #5

1. Did Ishmael use good communication skills? Yes No Not sure
2. How could Ishmael have done a better job using his communication skills?
Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. What would be the benefit of Ishmael using his communication skills? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #5

1. No, Ishmael did **not** use good communication skills. He did not ask for help.

He lied when asked if he needed help.

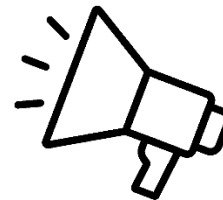
2. He should have:

- asked his co-workers for help
- been open to feedback
- listened carefully to his co-workers

He should not have lied to his co-workers.

3. If Ishmael used his communication skills:

- he would have done better work
- he would make fewer mistakes
- he would not fall behind
- he would not be embarrassed



Review

Now you have learned some strategies to use communication on the job:

- speaking clearly and with enough volume
- speaking with confidence
- being polite
- sharing your ideas
- listening carefully
- paying attention to non-verbal cues
- showing you understand using verbal and non-verbal cues
- asking questions when you don't understand
- asking for help
- treating others with respect
- being patient

Review these strategies for improving your communication skills at your distribution centre job.