

CURRICULUM RESOURCE

Skills for Success in the Workplace – Distribution Centres: Collaboration

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
Choose an item.	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

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 three of a five-part series on SFS in Distribution Centres.

Acknowledgements



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

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

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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 Three, Skills for Success in the Workplace: Distribution Centres –
Collaboration*

SFS In the Workplace: Distribution Centres Collaboration

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What is a Distribution Centre Job?

Distribution centre is another word for **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 licence
- 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 No Frills
- 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 more and 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 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 Collaboration?

Collaboration means **working together**. In the workplace, collaboration helps both the workers and the business.

- Collaboration is a key part of teamwork.
- You are an important part of the team!

➤ Why is collaboration important at work?

When you begin a distribution centre job, you join a **team**. If you practice collaboration, you become an important team player.

Employees with strong collaboration skills:

- are patient and generous with others
- help customers and co-workers
- learn from co-workers and managers
- are polite communicators
- welcome new team members



Teams are built out of people working together!

Collaboration at Your Distribution Centre Job

There are many ways you might collaborate at a distribution centre job:

a. Working as a Teammate

When you have a distribution centre job, you will do many tasks. Some of these you may need to do together with your co-workers.

Here are some examples:

- unloading or loading delivery trucks
- strapping furniture into harnesses for moving
- carrying heavy boxes
- keeping track of inventory

➤ If you learn to work together well, you will complete tasks more quickly and safely.



b. Meetings

Sometimes managers schedule meetings. The staff gathers to discuss work:

- The manager will often explain new rules or policies.
 - The manager will discuss any key changes to products or equipment.
 - The manager will announce upcoming tasks.
 - The manager will announce if there have been any changes to the staff.
- This is your chance to share your ideas with co-workers and managers.

c. Helping Out

Sometimes people at work can use help. Co-workers might ask you for a helping hand. Customers might need something from you.

Here are some examples:

- A co-worker needs help understanding a task.
 - A manager needs you to cover a shift for someone else.
 - A customer can't find a product in the store.
- When you help your co-workers and your manager, they are quick to help you in return.
- When you help customers, they are grateful.

d. Deliveries

The work at distribution centres often revolves around deliveries. Big deliveries to or from the warehouse require collaboration.

For example:

- Stock associates might work together efficiently to unload inventory.
- An inventory clerk might need help locating a missing package.
- A delivery driver might take directions from his co-worker in the passenger seat.

Overview

Start Developing Your Collaboration Skills for the Workplace

To be a good collaborator, you may need to learn to improve your collaboration skills.

Here are some steps you can take to do so:

- Be a team player.
- Be generous.
- Be patient.
- Be polite.



- Listen carefully.
- Share what you know.
- Learn from co-workers.
- Help new workers.

Activities

We will now do some activities about collaboration. These activities will 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 case. You will think about it. You will respond to some questions. Then we will review.

Activity #1

DeSean has been working at a Canadian Tire warehouse for a year. His main role is moving inventory to and from the warehouse shelves.

The warehouse is very large. It took DeSean a long time to learn where everything goes. But now that he is experienced, he can locate inventory quickly.

One day, a new staff member starts to work in the warehouse. This co-worker:

- has trouble locating inventory on the shelves
- is confused about the organization system used in the warehouse
- is making many mistakes

Activity #1 (Continued)

DeSean sees that his new co-worker needs help to do a better job. He knows that it will slow him down to help his co-worker. But he wants to be a good team member.

DeSean remembers how hard it was for him to learn when he started. He remembers that his boss talks about the importance of teamwork.

He also hopes his co-worker will learn to get better at the job and stop making mistakes.

DeSean is patient with his co-worker. He listens to his co-worker's needs.

He shows his co-worker where some inventory goes in the warehouse. He explains the organization system to his co-worker.

Questions #1

1. List one way that DeSean used his collaboration skills.
2. Why did he decide to help his co-worker? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. Why was it a good idea for DeSean to help his co-worker? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #1

1. De Sean used his collaboration skills by showing his co-worker where some inventory goes in the warehouse.

He also used his collaboration skills by explaining the organization system to his co-worker.

2. DeSean decided to help his co-worker because he remembered how hard it was to learn when he first started. He also remembered that his boss talks about teamwork.

He hoped his co-worker would learn to get better at the job. He also hoped that his co-worker would stop making mistakes.

3. By helping his co-worker, DeSean acted like a good team player. He was patient with his co-worker. He listened to his co-worker's needs and offered to help.

That's how you collaborate!

DeSean's boss will be pleased that he was a good team member.

Activity #2

Zainab has been working at a No Frills for a few months. Her main roles are to:

- unload delivery trucks
- unpack boxes
- stock shelves with products

She has become familiar with where everything goes on the store shelves. But one day her boss decides to change the organization of the shelves. He wants all the products moved to new locations.

Zainab's boss assigns this job to Zainab and four of her co-workers.

The job will involve a lot of bending down and climbing step ladders. Zainab has a bad back and finds bending down hard on her back.

She understands the new organization of the shelves. But she notices that her coworkers are confused about the new organization of the shelves.

Questions #2

1. What are some ways that Zainab could collaborate with her co-workers to make the job easier? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #2

1. If Zainab collaborates with her co-workers, she can help them to understand the new organization of the shelves. This will reduce mistakes and allow them to work faster.

Zainab could also work together with her co-workers to stock the shelves.

Since she finds bending down hard on her back, she could collaborate with a co-worker who has no trouble bending down. Zainab's co-worker could stock the lower shelves so that Zainab does not injure herself.

Sharing in the task this way, they can **work to their strengths**.

- When the members of a team **work to their strengths**, it means everyone does the job they are most capable of doing.
- This can even mean working independently sometimes!

Activity #3

Svetlana works as an inventory clerk for a big retail store. She spends a lot of time working by herself on a computer and she enjoys this.

One weekend, all the staff is scheduled for a special shift. They will make sure that the inventory on the shelves matches what is recorded in the computer.

The manager assigns each section of the store to two staff. The manager says working together is fastest.

Svetlana's co-worker wants to work together. This co-worker has experience with inventory counts.

But Svetlana prefers working on her own. So she checks the inventory by herself. It takes than much longer than the other groups.

Svetlana's manager is not pleased that it took them so long.

Questions #3

1. Does Svetlana use her collaboration skills? Yes No Not sure
2. What would have been some benefits of Svetlana working with her co-worker?
Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #3

1. No, Svetlana did **not** use her collaboration skills.
2. If Svetlana worked with her co-worker, they would have completed the work much faster.

She might also have learned new ways of doing the task from her co-worker.

- Collaborating can be harder if you are a shy person.

Here are some tips for collaborating if you are shy:

- Try to work in smaller groups.
- Try to work in quieter spaces.
- Don't be afraid to lead the way.
- Trust in your ideas and contributions.
- Take breaks as needed.

Activity #4

Sandra is one of many people hired to work in the warehouse of a new Costco.

As new staff, Sandra must attend three training sessions. These workshops introduce Costco's on-the-job policies.

Early on, it is suggested the trainees work together. This might make it easier to learn the new policies. Some other trainees suggest to Sandra that they work together.

But Sandra does not know anyone else. She decides to study the material on her own.

Questions #4

1. Did Sandra use her collaboration skills? Yes No Not sure
2. How could she have worked with her co-workers? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. How would she have benefitted from working with the group? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #4

1. No, Sandra did **not** use her collaboration skills.
2. She could have joined with the group to learn the new policies. Collaborating in this way would have made her more of a **team player**.
3. If she collaborated with the group, she might have had an easier time learning the new policies.

She may have learned how to do her job better.

She might have helped others to learn.

She might have gotten to know some of her co-workers.

She might have impressed her boss with her teamwork.



Activity #5

Rudy works as a mover for a moving company. He has been working with this company for two years.

Rudy works with a co-worker named Devon. Both of them are responsible for sharing the different tasks. Rudy reliably completes tasks such as:

- packing boxes
- loading and unloading the moving truck
- taking his turn driving the truck
- taking his turn filling the truck up with gas

Whenever Rudy and Devon have completed a job, they must fill out a report. But Rudy does not like to do paperwork. He does not take his turn filling out reports.

This means that his co-worker Devon always has to fill out reports. It also means that Devon must spend even longer doing this job.

Questions #5

1. Who was **not** using good collaboration skills? Rudy Devon
2. What should Rudy have done differently? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #5

1. Rudy was **not** using good collaboration skills by not taking his turn filling out reports.
2. Rudy should have done a better job collaborating with Devon by taking his turn filling out reports.

He doesn't like filling out reports, but it is one of his duties. He should have been more of a team player and done his part.

His boss will be disappointed that he was not a good collaborator.

- It is common for people to dislike some parts of their job.
- Being a good collaborator sometimes means everyone taking turns doing the less likable parts of a job.



Review

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

- You have learned the importance of being a team player on the job.
- You have learned the importance of putting the business first.
- You have learned the importance of being polite and patient.
- You have learned the importance of being flexible and generous.

You can go back to this guide to review the strategies for improving your collaboration at your distribution centre job.