

CURRICULUM RESOURCE

Skills for Success in the Workplace – Distribution Centres: Adaptability

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 | 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 two 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” to which they will have to 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.

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 Two, Skills for Success in the Workplace: Distribution Centres
– Adaptability*

SFS In the Workplace: Distribution Centres Adaptability

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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 instructions? Yes No
5. Can you be well-organized? Yes No
6. Are you able to lift things that weigh up to 20 pounds? 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 Adaptability?

Adaptability means learning how to change the way you work and accepting those changes.

Adaptability allows you to succeed, even when faced with the unexpected!

Why is Adaptability Important at Work?

Change can be hard, especially if it happens quickly. But if you are open to change, you can **improve** your work on the job.

➤ Will you rise to meet a new challenge?

Employees who learn to be **adaptable**:

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



Managers rely on **adaptable** staff.

Adaptability at Your Distribution Centre Job

There are many ways you might need to adapt at a distribution centre job:

a. New Roles

When you are hired for a job, you are often given a **role**. At a warehouse, you might be:

- a stock person
- an inventory associate
- a forklift driver
- an organizer



But sometimes your boss asks you to try a **new role**. This may be a reward for good work or a “promotion.” It may help the boss fill a role when someone else is sick.

b. New Ways of Doing Things

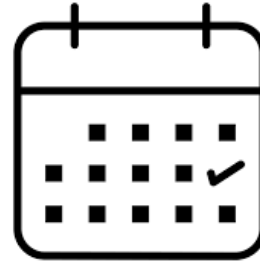
Even if you keep the same role, the way you do things might **change**. A stock person in a warehouse might be asked to:

- use new equipment or machines
- use new computers or programs for inventory
- follow new procedures for stocking shelves
- place products in different places or reorganize shelves

c. New Shifts

Sometimes you become used to working on certain days or at certain times. But your boss could **change your schedule**. You might have to work:

- early mornings
- evenings
- late at night
- weekends
- holidays



Your boss might also ask you to “**cover**” someone’s shift.

- Cover means to **work the shift of someone else**.

d. New Co-Workers or Boss

When you start a new job, it takes a while to get to know your boss and co-workers. But your co-workers will sometimes change. Some people will quit. Some new people will be hired.

Your **boss** or your **managers** may even change.



Overview

Start Developing Your Adaptability Skills for the Workplace

To embrace these changes, you may need to learn to improve your **adaptability** skills.

Here are some steps you can take to do so:

- Be flexible or open to change.
- Be open-minded or open to new ideas.
- Be interested in trying new things.
- Be willing to learn.
- Be generous by helping your co-workers. Be patient.



It's great to be adaptable. But remember your rights:

- You can say no to covering shifts.
- If you are unable to do certain jobs, say so.
- Be confident and stand up for yourself.

Activities

We will now do some activities that will give you a good sense of how to use problem solving skills at work. 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



In each case, you will read a scenario, think about it, and respond to some questions. Then we will review.

Activity #1

Saleem has been working at an Amazon warehouse for six months. He was trained to do many **different roles** at work. But from the beginning, he has only been responsible for recording inventory on the computer.

One day his boss tells him that a co-worker has quit.

They need Saleem to take on some new roles. He has to:

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

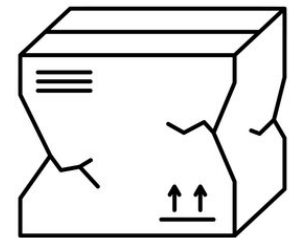
Activity #1 (Continued)

Saleem enjoyed working at the computer. He is not happy that he is now required to do more physical work.

He doesn't want his boss to make him do the loading and unloading again, so he decides that he will do a bad job.

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

Saleem hopes that his boss will put him back on the computer.



Questions #1

1. Did Saleem handle the situation well? Yes No Not sure **Explain.**
2. If you think he did not handle the situation well, what did he do wrong? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. What should he have done differently? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
4. Do you think Saleem's boss will be happy with him? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #1

1. No, Saleem did **not** handle the situation well.
2. He should **not** have done his work poorly. He should not have dropped boxes or lost boxes. He should not have damaged the inventory. If he did not want to change roles, **he should have explained why.**
3. He should have tried to be more open-minded about his new role. He should have tried to be more flexible. He might have learned how to **improve** on the job. He might have learned to **adapt** to his new role.
4. Saleem's boss was not happy that Saleem did a poor job. He might even fire Saleem.

Saleem put his job at risk by not trying to adapt.



Activity #2

Kenji works in shipping and receiving at a Tim Horton's warehouse. One of his main roles has been to unload boxes of coffee from the delivery trucks.

The boxes of coffee used to weigh 20 pounds. Kenji was able to work quickly, unloading one box at a time.

He liked working quickly. He liked working on his own. But the company has changed the size of their boxes of coffee. They now weigh forty pounds.

Kenji knows that lifting the heavier boxes by himself increases his risk of injury.

He decides that he will change his routine and lift the heavier boxes with a co-worker.



He does not like working slower. He prefers working on his own. But he and his co-worker prevent injury by carrying the boxes together.

Kenji's co-worker also teaches Kenji some safe-lifting tips!

Questions #2

1. List one way Kenji used his adaptability skills.
2. What are the benefits of Kenji adapting? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #2

1. Kenji used his adaptability skills by **changing his routine**. Instead of carrying the coffee boxes on his own, he began carrying them with a co-worker.

Kenji did not want to change his routine. He liked the old way of doing things. But he was **open-minded** to doing the task a new way. He was **flexible** enough to try something different.

That's how you adapt!

2. There were many benefits to adapting for Kenji.

He reduced the risk of injury by carrying the heavier boxes with a co-worker. He also learned some tips for safe lifting from his co-worker.

➤ Safe lifting tips:

- Bend your knees and lower yourself next to the object.
- Use a wide stance.
- Tip the object away from your fingers to get a safe grip.
- Lift with the strength of your legs, not your back.
- Keep your back straight as you lift.



Activity #3

Penelope works as a mover for a moving company. There are many stressful parts to her job.

She has to work most weekends since this is when most people move. As the driver of the moving truck, she has to be sure the truck is filled with gas. She has to get directions to many different locations and drive there.

She is also given many different instructions by the people she is moving. One day, the instructions she is given keep changing.



First, she is told to stack the boxes at the back of the truck. Then she is told to stack the boxes at the side of the truck. Next, she is told not to touch some of the fragile items. Then she is told to move the fragile items into the truck.

Penelope gets annoyed that the instructions keep changing. She wanted her boss to write the instructions down. She ignores the instructions. She also stops being polite.

The next day, her boss tells Penelope that the moving clients complained about her.

Questions #3

1. Did Penelope use her adaptability skills? Yes No Not sure
2. How could she have used her adaptability skills? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. How could Penelope have asked her boss for more help?

Answers #3

1. No, Penelope did **not** use her adaptability skills.
2. She should have been more **patient** when receiving the instructions given to her. She should have been more **flexible** when the instructions changed.

In some jobs of this sort, employees will have to deal with customers by using good customer service skills.

Penelope should have been **polite**.

By not adapting to the situation, Penelope made the customers angry. She got in trouble with her boss and put her job at risk.

3. She could have asked her boss to write down the instructions.

➤ Tips for good customer service:

- Listen to the customer's needs.
- Be polite.
- Be positive.
- Be patient.
- Help the customer get in touch with your boss if necessary.



Activity #4

Shaniqua has been a stock person at a Canadian Tire warehouse for a year. She has grown comfortable with her duties, which include:

- unloading boxes from delivery trucks
- stocking and organizing the warehouse shelves
- cleaning the warehouse shelves and aisles

One day her boss tells her that there is an opportunity for her if she would like to be a forklift operator. This would require her to get her forklift operator certificate.

Shaniqua is nervous to take on a new role. But in her new role as a forklift operator, she would make more money and improve her skills.

She decides to make a change and pursue her forklift operator certificate. In a few months, she is working as a forklift operator and making more on her paycheck.

Questions #4

1. Do you think Shaniqua handled the situation well? Yes No Not sure
2. How did she adapt to the situation? Discuss with your teacher or partner.
3. What are the benefits of her adapting? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #4

1. Yes, Shaniqua did the right thing by taking on a new role.
2. She adapted to the situation by being **open-minded** about taking on a new role, even though it was more challenging. She adapted by taking the steps required to become a forklift operator.
3. There were many benefits to adapting to her new role. She now makes more money. She has more employability skills. She also gained the confidence that she can operate a complicated machine like a forklift!

➤ Driving a forklift in Ontario requires a special certificate. You can get a forklift operator certificate by taking a training course that will teach:

- how to operate different forklifts
- important safety measures to follow
- principles and guidelines
- practical lessons to help you practice



➤ In some cases, like Shaniqua's, the employer will pay for the forklift training course.

Activity #5

Peter and Carmen have both worked in the warehouse of a Costco for a year. They have not worked weekends for many months. They only work Monday to Friday.

But some of the staff have gotten sick this week. The manager has asked if Peter or Carmen could cover a weekend shift when there will be a big delivery.

Carmen does not want to work on weekends. But she agrees to come in on the weekend and cover the shift of one of the sick staff.

But Peter believes that he has earned the right not to work weekends. So he says that he will not cover any shifts. He says:



Questions #5

1. Who showed good adaptability skills? Peter Carmen
2. What should Peter have done differently? Discuss with your teacher or partner.

Answers #5

1. Carmen showed good adaptability skills. She did not want to work on the weekend, but she agreed to anyway.

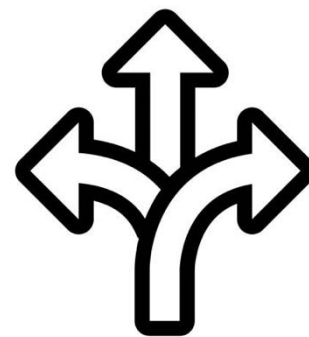
Peter did not show good adaptability skills. He did not come in to work on the weekend, even though they were shorthanded.

2. Peter could have been more flexible about his work schedule. He should not be forced to cover the shift of someone else. But it is reasonable for a manager to ask an employee to cover shifts once in a while.

If Peter covered the shift, he would have met new staff members. He would have helped out his manager and helped out the team.

He would also have found it easier to get a shift of his covered in the future if he needed to.

- Peter does have the right not to switch shifts. Carmen should get time off during the week, if she works on the weekend.



Review

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

- You have learned the importance of being flexible on the job.
- You have learned the importance of being generous with co-workers.
- You have learned the importance of being open-minded.
- You have learned the importance of being willing to learn new things.
- You have learned the importance of being patient when things change.

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