

**Curriculum Resource**

Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail & Food Services – Problem Solving

**OALCF Alignment**

| Competency                                       | Task Group               | Level           |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Competency A -Find and Use Information           | A1. Read continuous text | 1               |
| Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information | B1. Interact with others | 1               |
| Competency F - Engage with Others                | Choose an item.          | Choose an item. |
| 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 2 of Series

## Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail

### NOTE FOR PRACTITIONERS:

This series of **Skills for Success Curriculum Resources** can be used as a supplement to the [“Retail Curriculum package”](#) produced by Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) in 2019. It is not an adaptation of that material but an addendum focusing on five newly identified Skills for Success competencies—**Problem Solving, Adaptability, Creativity & Innovation, Collaboration, and Communication**—as well as updates to the retail sector itself.

These resources are learner-based and activity-focused, moving the learner through on-the-job “scenarios” which they will have to respond to. In 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 six sections that can be used separately or in tandem:

Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail – **Finding a Job**

Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail – **Problem Solving**

Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail – **Adaptability**

Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail – **Creativity & Innovation**

Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail – **Collaboration**

Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail – **Communication**

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*This is section two, Skills for Success in the Workplace: Retail – Problem Solving*

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# SKILLS FOR SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE: RETAIL

## Problem Solving

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## 1. What is a “Retail” Job?

A job in retail means:

- Selling products to customers, or
- Doing **other jobs** at a place that sells products to customers—a retail store.

This work is best for:

- People with good customer service skills
- People who like to interact with others
- People who care about business

## 2. What Sorts of Jobs are in Retail?

There are retail jobs at many different stores and businesses. You could work:

- A convenience store as a cashier
- A grocery store stocking shelves
- A Walmart as a greeter
- A hair salon scheduling appointments.
- A car dealership selling cars
- A Tim Hortons' drive-thru
- A restaurant as a dishwasher or server

### 3. What Skills and Habits Do You Need to Work in Retail?

To succeed in a retail job you need some key **skills**:

- Basic numeracy
- Basic computer skills
- Good customer service skills
- **Problem solving skills**
- Adaptability
- Time-management
- Multitasking
- Collaboration skills like teamwork
- Creativity and innovation skills like trying tasks in new ways
- Strong communication

To succeed in a retail job you need also some key **habits**:

- Presentable appearance
- Politeness
- Being on time for work



## 4. What is “Problem Solving”?

Problem solving is just what it sounds like: solving problems by coming up with **solutions that work better for everyone.**

### Why is Problem Solving Important at Work?

Some people think that problem solving is a skill that is only used by bosses and managers. But **all employees** can benefit from developing and practicing their **problem-solving skills.**

Employees with strong problem-solving skills:

- Think of **better ways** of doing things
- Help **resolve at-work issues**
- Become **valuable members** of the team
- Help the business to **thrive**



## 5. Problem Solving at Your Retail Job

There are many sorts of problems you might face at a retail job:

### a. Customer Problems

At a retail job, it is the responsibility of everyone on staff to keep customers happy by **addressing their needs** and **solving their problems**.

Customers might need help:

- Finding a product
- Getting something off a shelf or carrying something to their car
- Understanding how a product works
- Learning the price of a product

Customers might also have a **complaint** about something!



### b. Co-worker or Management Problems

Hopefully, you get along with your co-workers and your boss, but sometimes conflicts do arise at work:



- You might **disagree** with co-workers about how things are done.
- Co-workers might **complain** about you to the boss.
- The boss might **express concerns** about the work you are doing.

**c. Problems with the Work Itself**

Even if you love your job, you will still likely face some challenges:

- You might be assigned a new task and **not understand how to do it.**
- You might have a task that you find **really challenging.**

**d. Problems on the Job**

If you **pay close attention** while at work, you will sometimes encounter other problems like:

- Products **out of place** or **broken**
- Products **improperly labelled** or **not labelled** at all
- **Safety concerns** and **dangers** around the workplace





**Start Developing Your Problem Solving Skills for the Workplace**

To begin addressing some of these problems, you will need to learn to improve your problem-solving skills.

Here are some steps you can take:

- ✓ Listen carefully
- ✓ Pay attention
  
- ✓ Be flexible
- ✓ Be generous
  
- ✓ Be patient
- ✓ Be polite
- ✓ Share what you know



# 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 retail
- The daily tasks you might do
- On-the-job challenges
- Other key skills for success in retail
- 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

Susan works at a big grocery store as a **cashier**. Near the end of her shift, a customer comes to her line and complains about the price of a can of beans.

**The customer says:**

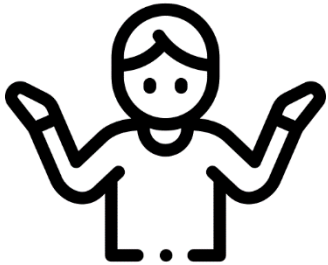


These same beans were a lot **CHEAPER** last week!  
Why are they so much more?  
This isn't right!

## Activity #1 (Continued)

Susan doesn't set the prices in the store, and she is tired at the end of her shift.

So she tells the customer:



I can't do anything about the prices.  
But products are always marked with  
the correct price.

This makes the customer even **angrier**. But now the line is growing behind the customer, so Susan says: **"If you don't want it, put it back. But you're holding up the line."**

**Questions:**

1. Do you think Susan handled the situation well? Check one: **Yes** **No** **Not sure**
2. If you think she could have handled the situation better, what did she do wrong? **Discuss** with your teacher or partner.
3. What should she have done differently? **Discuss** with your teacher or partner.

## Answers #1

- Susan could have done a better job **listening** to what the customer had to say.
- After listening to the customer, she should have made an effort to **be patient** and **be polite**.
- Susan should have **apologized**. It is a good idea to apologize to a customer when they have a complaint.
- Susan also should have **shared the customer's concerns with a manager**.
- A **manager** would have been better able to answer the customer's questions and satisfy their needs.



## Activity #2

This week, Wanda began a job as a cashier at a big grocery store. She is still learning where all the products are located, and so when a customer ask her where to find the bottles of ketchup, she doesn't know the answer.

The customer is **very annoyed**. He says:



You should know where the ketchup is!  
This is your **job**!  
And I'm in a big hurry!

Wanda tells the customer not to be so rude and walks away.

### Questions:

1. Do you think Wanda handled the situation well? Circle one: **Yes**   **No**   **Not sure**
2. If you think she could have handled the situation better, what did she do wrong?  
**Discuss** with your teacher or partner.
3. What should she have done differently? **Discuss** with your teacher or partner.

## Answers #2

- Wanda should have **listened carefully** to what the customer had to say.
- After listening to the customer, she should have made an effort to **be patient** and **be polite**.
- Wanda should have **apologized**. It is a good idea to apologize to a customer when they have a complaint.
- Wanda also should have **shared the customer's concerns with a co-worker who could help**.

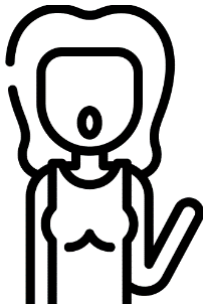


## Activity #3

Raj has been working at a Tim Horton's for two years. He knows when to brew a new pot of coffee. He knows where to take garbage bags that are full.

But this week a new staff member, Linda, was hired, and she begins to **criticize** how Raj is doing things.

**Linda says:**



You're not brewing the coffee quickly enough!  
You're doing a bad job!

Raj has been working here a lot longer than Linda has. He knows that she is wrong.

He tells her: **Leave me alone! You don't know what you're talking about!**

**Questions:**

1. Do you think Raj handled the situation well? Circle one: **Yes** **No** **Not sure**
2. If you think he could have handled the situation better, what did he do wrong?  
**Discuss** with your teacher or partner.
3. What should Raj have done differently in this situation? **Discuss** with your teacher or partner.

## Answers #3

- Raj could have done a better job being **patient** and **polite**.
- He should have **listened** to Linda's ideas before getting angry.
- He should have **reminded** Linda about the policies in place at the store.
- He should have **told** a manager about her concerns.
- By sharing Linda's concerns with a manager, Raj might have helped the team find a new and better way of doing things.
- This is a great result of **problem solving!**





## Activity #4

John has been working at a Tim Horton's for almost three months.

He is still learning his job. But he is **enjoying it** and **trying his best**.

One day, John's boss calls him into her office. She says **she is not happy with John's work**:

- She thinks that he could be less sloppy when he mops the floors.
- She thinks he could be friendlier to customers when they come in the restaurant.

### Question:

What should John do in this situation? **Discuss** with your teacher or partner.

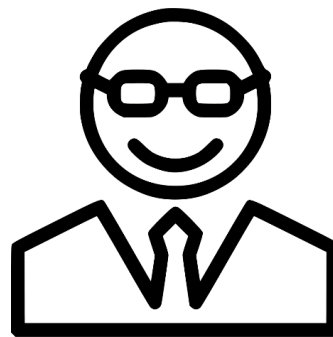


## Answers #4

- One of the best ways to solve problems at work is to **learn from others**.
- This includes learning how to do your job better every day.
- Taking guidance from others will make you a **better employee**.
- John should thank his boss for guidance.
- He should promise to work on **improving** for the future.



Listen and learn!



## Activity #5

Finn works as a busboy at a restaurant. It is his responsibility to:

- Remove dirty dishes from tables
- Sweep the floor
- Empty the garbage



In the middle of his shift one night, he sees that **someone has spilled a garbage bag in the back room.**

It is the job of busboys to deal with **garbage in the restaurant.**

But Finn didn't make this mess. He knows if he tells anyone about it, he will have to clean it up himself.

He decides **not to say anything.**

**He leaves the mess there,** hoping another busboy will clean it up.

### Questions:

1. Do you think Finn handled the situation well? Circle one: **Yes** **No** **Not sure**
2. If you think he could have handled the situation better, what did he do wrong?  
**Discuss** with your teacher or partner.
3. What should Finn have done differently in this situation? **Discuss** with your teacher or partner.

## Answers #5

- Finn should have been more **generous** to his co-workers and cleaned the mess himself.
- Finn should have been more **flexible** in his routine in order to deal with the problem.
- You can't solve every problem.
- You can't do your co-workers' work for them.
- But it is good practice to **help your co-workers when you can**.



## Review

- ✓ Now you have learned some **strategies** to use problem solving on the job.
- ✓ You have learned the importance of **listening carefully** on the job.
- ✓ You have learned the importance of **sharing information** with others.
- ✓ 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 problem solving at your job.

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