



# Essentially Yours: Training in the Essential Skills

## Let's Go!

### Putting Essential Skills into Your Practice

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CLO's *Essentially Yours: Training in the Essential Skills* project will wrap up in April 2008. A new, self-directed training module will be added to CLO's Literacy Basics website [www.nald.ca/literacybasics/](http://www.nald.ca/literacybasics/) and registration forms have been circulated for two on-line training sessions on Centra.

This is CLO's final installment of the *Essentially Yours: Training in the Essential Skills* bulletins. In the first bulletin you were introduced to the Essential Skills (ES) and their definitions, the story behind ES, the ES website, and the ES profiles. Bulletin #2 introduced complexity levels, and explored how authentic workplace materials can support ES development by encouraging learners to master a variety of skills in a relevant environment. Bulletin #2 also examined the NOC codes and showed how learners could explore potential occupational interests, and the skills required for those occupations.

In this issue, CLO will compare similarities between the ES levels and the levels currently used in most agencies to assess literacy and basic skills. We will also continue to explore the ES website, ES profiles, and how ES are currently being used in literacy.

The ES website has undergone some changes since our last bulletin! Several new tools have been introduced and some of the links have been repositioned. We encourage you to visit the website often to become familiar with current material and to have timely access to any new resources. The "new" Essential Skills Toolkit link is a great addition to the main menu, and this bulletin will review some of the new tools, and show you how they might be used in your programming.

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<a href="#">Apples to Oranges? Making LBS to ES Level Comparisons</a>	2/3
<a href="#">Catch a New Wave — Surfing the ES Site Like a Pro!</a>	4/5
<a href="#">ES Profiles—Using the Profiles to Develop Training Plans</a>	6/7
<a href="#">Essential Skills in Action</a>	8
<a href="#">ES Resources</a>	8

# Apples to Oranges?

## How to Make Comparisons Between LBS Levels and ES Levels

When it comes to incorporating Essential Skills methodology, practitioners might consider the adage, “don't throw the baby out with the bathwater”. Like any new idea or technique that is introduced into the field of education and training, ES should be regarded as an additional tool to support practitioners and learners as they work towards establishing and meeting programming goals. The ES approach is not a completely new way of thinking, and the language used is familiar enough that the majority of LBS practitioners will be able to work in tandem with ES and LBS tools.



Many of the similarities between Literacy and Basic Skills and the ES levels can be seen in the table below. The language, skill indicators, and task examples are so similar that the lines even blur between some categories. An attraction of Essential Skills language is the absence of ambiguity; the skills and accompanying tasks are clearly stated, and makes sense to learners. This is particularly important when you are working with learners to create their training plans. A document that is in plain language is more accessible, and can be kept and reviewed by the learner in order to chart his/her progress.

LBS Level 3	Essential Skills Bartender Profile
<b>Domain:</b> Numeracy	<b>Essential Skill:</b> Numeracy
<b>Component Outcome:</b> Use Number Sense and Computation	<b>Definition:</b> Refers to the individual's use of numbers and their being required to think in quantitative terms.
<b>Feature:</b> Whole Numbers, Decimals, and Integers	<b>Mathematical Foundations Used:</b> Whole Numbers, Rational Numbers – Decimals & Percent
<b>Performance Indicator:</b> Performs money calculations; Makes change using fewest number of coins	<b>Application/Level of Complexity:</b> 1 Money Math; financial transaction/ Enter amount in a cash register; receive payments; make change
<b>Example:</b> Operates a cash register	<b>Task:</b> Level 1 Take payments in the form of cash or credit cards and make change

## How to Make Comparisons Between LBS and ES - Continued...

### Writing Complexity Rating Scale



Dimension: 1. Length and Purpose of the Writing				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less than a paragraph</li> <li>- Intended to organize, remind or inform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brief text that is a paragraph or longer intended to serve a variety of purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Either long or shorter pieces of writing intended to inform, explain, request information, express opinions or</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Longer pieces of writing which present considerable information and which may feature a comparison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Longer pieces of writing which present an evaluation or critique usually accompanied by recommendations</li> </ul>

An excerpt from the Companion to the Authentic Workplace Materials User Guide on the ES Website

LBS level descriptors and Essential Skills complexity levels provide a continuum to enable practitioners to chart progress according to increasing demands. Like LBS training, Essential Skills training is goal-directed and outcomes-based, as ES tools can be used to document step-by-step development of specific skills with the introduction and successful completion of incrementally more difficult tasks. For example, reviewing the summary statements for *Write Clearly to Express Ideas* from page 29 of the *Level Descriptions Manual* shows that each level described matches well with the complexity ratings for the Essential Skill of Writing.

Specific, detailed complexity ratings for each of the nine Essential Skills can be found on the ES website <http://srv108.services.gc.ca> in the *Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles*. Helpful links include three quick reference complexity rating scales for Reading Text, Writing, and Document Use, which can be found in the *Companion to Authentic Workplace Materials User Guide*. A sample of one of the scales is provided above. Note how ES complexity ratings are broken down very specifically. Three dimensions are used to assess the complexity level of writing tasks, including the length and purpose, the style and structure, and the content of the writing. ES researchers discovered that the skill of writing is often thought of in terms of being only creative or narrative. The workplace writing examples found in the ES profiles more accurately demonstrate the broad range of simple and complex forms of writing that adult learners are more likely to face in their day-to-day lives.

# Catch a New Wave

## Surfing the ES Site Like a Pro!

The Essential Skills website <http://srv108.services.gc.ca> is very comprehensive, and exploring its contents can be very rewarding. HRSDC updates the ES website on a regular basis, and recent updates have led to a number of significant changes. For example, the main menu has been reconfigured and some of the headings reworded. It is advisable to bookmark pages you like for continued ease of access, and to visit often to discover new profiles, ES tools, and resources.



## The Website



- Understanding Essential Skills
- Essential Skills Profiles
- Authentic Workplace Materials
- **Essential Skills Toolkit**
- Publications & Research
- Office of Literacy and Essential Skills
- How Can I Use This Site?
- FAQs

### Essential Skills Training Tools

Recent additions to the website include the *Essential Skills Toolkit*. Follow the link and choose one of two paths to review a selection of assessment, activity, and training tools. The *Essential Skills On-line Indicator* is a pilot tool that was designed for learners or employees to assess their skill strengths and areas for improvement.

Participants select from a growing list on the Indicator's "quiz menu." These quizzes test Essential Skills ability with level 1 through 3 tasks, providing immediate results using an interesting selection of tasks from a wide variety of occupations. Tested skills can be easily transferred to similar non-occupational tasks. Practitioners can take the quizzes themselves to get better acquainted with how different tasks are chosen to demonstrate the various Essential Skills.

There are also three pen and paper indicator tools that are equally helpful in familiarizing users with the ES system. As displayed on page five, tools such as this make excellent material for assessment purposes, or to use with learners as skill development activities.

Although developed with employers in mind, the *Essential Skills Training Activities* can be modified to reflect "life" and "learning" activities. Used as a guide, they are useful to develop similar non-employment activities.

## ES Training Tools - Continued...

At 43, my life changed completely. I had a major accident which forced me to get a job indoors. That's when I learned about Essential Skills. With the support of my employer and the Nova Scotia Department of Education, I learned how to read and write. Now I can read documents and graphs at work, and contribute to the company newsletter.

*Mel Lively, Living and Learning—Essential Skills Success Stories*

The *Publications and Research* link hosts a variety of colourful brochures that provide useful case studies and ES tools for practising a variety of Essential Skills. One example is the *Living and Learning – Essential Skills Success Stories* brochure, which profiles six working Canadians, giving specific examples of the ES they worked on, their reasons for doing so, and how their lives were improved through ES development. Outcomes, such as “improved relationships with co-workers,” and “improved self-confidence” are listed to illustrate how ES development can benefit an individual as a whole. Complete with ES definitions and a guide to help learners identify personal and professional goals, this 15-page pamphlet is an excellent tool that will not only introduce learners to the ES, but will likely inspire them as well.

## Document Use Indicator

### LEVEL 1

#### Question # 1

Which symbol represents corrosive material?

Circle or underline your answer in the hazardous materials table below.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS			
 <p><b>CLASS A</b> Compressed Gas</p>	 <p><b>CLASS B</b> Flammable and Combustible Material</p>	 <p><b>CLASS C</b> Oxidizing Material</p>	 <p><b>CLASS D-1</b> Poisonous and Infectious Material (material causing immediate and serious effects)</p>
 <p><b>CLASS D-2</b> Poisonous and Infectious Material (material causing other toxic effects)</p>	 <p><b>CLASS D-3</b> Poisonous and Infectious Material (biohazardous infectious material)</p>	 <p><b>CLASS E</b> Corrosive Material</p>	 <p><b>CLASS F</b> Dangerously Reactive Material</p>

This sample was taken from page 4 of the Document Use Indicator – A Guide for Employers, <http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/Document%20Use%20Indicator%20-%20English.pdf>

# Essential Skills Profiles

## Using the Profiles to Develop Training Plans



### Truck Drivers

#### NOC [7411](#)

##### [Introduction](#)

Truck drivers operate heavy trucks to transport goods and materials over urban, interurban, provincial and international routes. They are employed by transportation companies, manufacturing and distribution companies, moving companies or they may be self-employed.

The Essential Skills profiles are an excellent companion document for practitioners and learners in creating and maintaining their training plans. Providing detailed summaries of tasks that are common to other occupations and daily life activities, the profiles include example Essential Skills tasks that illustrate not only how the skill is used, but how it must be developed to complete more complex tasks as well. This is useful for learners who want to assess their current skills against the requirement of particular occupations or occupation groups to identify career options or training needs. If learners work from a profile with occupations or activities that interest them, they are more likely to be motivated to develop their skills.

The majority of ES profiles were created for jobs that require a high school diploma or less. This creates a good match for learners who are working towards their GED. The long list of occupations may surprise learners who may not have realized the types of jobs they could access. Having something exciting to aim for is a great incentive for developing one's skills.

Many of the ES profiles include examples that reflect tasks we perform in daily life, such as making shopping lists or scheduling appointments. As mentioned in a previous bulletin, the tasks and most important Essentials Skills documented in the Visiting Homemakers, Housekeepers profile, for example, are extremely transferable.

Practitioners create training plans with their learners to help learners create and then achieve their goals. Goals that also provide hope for a better future are excellent motivators, and support the development of skills that are used to perform authentic tasks. ES profiles support developing authentic task-related goals that are outcomes-based. These goals can be based on learners performing tasks related to paid employment or carrying out every day living tasks. Authentic tasks – such as using a map to plot a driving route – can be more meaningful than working from a textbook alone.

## Using the Profiles to Develop Training Plans— Continued...

The tables below illustrate how a practitioner can use information from the ES profiles and *Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles* to create a training plan. The entry level tasks come from the Document Use Summary – which is contained in each ES profile. The 22 Document Use tasks that were developed by the ES Research Project, represent the diverse applications of Document Use skills in the workplace. Not all of the tasks will appear in every profile, but many do, making it easy for learners to see how they can use their skills in a variety of situations.

In the case below, the target skills are a combination of sample tasks from the Summary and the tasks found in the profile for Truck Driver. The “demonstration” was developed based on a sample task found in the Truck Driver’s profile. Skill evaluation and expectations are very easy to understand and provide a clear path for specific ES development.

### B. Document Use

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Complexity Level</u>	<u>Examples</u>
<u>Typical</u>	1 to 2	Truck Drivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read road signs, safety signs and product labels. (1)</li> </ul>
<u>Most Complex</u>	1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refer to scale tickets at weighing stations to get the weight of the axles before leaving the check point. (1)</li> <li>• fill in drivers' checklists, verifying the safety of various parts of the truck. (1)</li> <li>• refer to city and provincial maps and to tables in atlases which show the distances between various cities in North America. (2)</li> <li>• interpret sketches from other drivers</li> </ul>

ENTRY LEVEL	TARGET	GOAL REQUIREMENTS
<b>DOCUMENT USE</b>		
Outline of learner’s present skills	Skills learner must develop	Skills the learner should master and demonstrate
Bill is currently able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read simple signs, labels or lists (1)</li> <li>• Complete forms by marking check boxes, or recording numerical information (1)</li> </ul>	Bill must learn to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use city and provincial maps (2)</li> <li>• Complete forms by marking check boxes, recording numerical information or entering words, sentences or text of a paragraph of more(2)</li> </ul>	Bill will demonstrate his ability to complete forms using words, sentences, or text of a paragraph or more, by filling in a form to explain why the shipment could not be delivered. The instructor will provide him with the necessary details to document the mix up.

Examples were pulled from the Readers’ Guide Document Use Summary task list.

## Essential Skills in Action

The Adult Learning Training Centre in Perth, Ontario is in the process of changing their Training Plans to reflect Essential Skills language. The practitioners work with learners to identify occupations they are interested in, and then compile a list of authentic workplace materials from the corresponding ES profile. Materials are used for training purposes - to identify skills and tasks, and for creating learning activities and demonstrations. Supplementary to the material found on the ES site, Program Director, Laura Mullin says they also rely on a variety of government websites, as well as LLEO's curriculum for entry level jobs to provide authentic learning tools.



Preparatory Training Programs of Toronto (PTP) runs an experiential program called the *Teamwork Project* that uses team-based activities to develop Essential Skills. Authentic activities include running a snack shop, producing a newsletter, and participating on a planning committee. Teams are multi-leveled, and chosen based on learners' interests. The *Teamwork*

*Project* provides a context for learning and practising ES in a hands-on environment, where learners must use a multitude of ES to carry out their tasks. PTP Executive Director, Barb McFater, says the project is their most "sustained and comprehensive effort to incorporate ES training into programming to date." <http://ptp.ca/main/>

## Essential Skills Resources

Literacy Link Eastern Ontario (LLEO) has developed a Common Assessment of Essential Skills (CAES) tool to help practitioners tie Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) outcomes to Essential Skills. Demonstrations taken from their Common Assessment of Basic Skills (CABS) manual have been articulated to the nine Essential Skills using a template designed to align the two systems. CAES is particularly useful because it increases the number of skill sets that can be identified within a given demonstration. The articulation tool is scheduled to be released in the spring. Visit <http://www.lleo.ca/cabs3/index.html> for information about the CABS manual, and CABS on-line.

### Ready for Work

Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network is in the final stages of piloting six workforce curricula to prepare LBS level 1 and 2 learners for entry-level positions. Each unit has been articulated to the Essential Skills. They have also prepared an ES module for practitioners that offers a variety of learner activities. A manual will be available soon.

[www.nald.ca/smln/index.htm](http://www.nald.ca/smln/index.htm)

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