

**Curriculum Resource**

Apprenticeship Answers: Putting Your Best Foot Forward

**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          | 2     |
| Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information | B2. Write continuous text         | 2     |
| Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information | B3. Complete and create documents | 2     |

**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:** While each of the Skills for Success is embedded, this resource focuses on Adaptability, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity and Innovation, and Problem Solving.

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**Note:** Originally one large resource with three units, based on recommendations from our expert advisors, it has been divided into several separate resources:

1. Apprenticeship Answers: Exploring Apprenticeship
2. Apprenticeship Answers: How do I Become an Apprentice?
3. Apprenticeship Answers: Skills for Apprenticeship Success
4. Apprenticeship Answers: By the Numbers
5. Apprenticeship Answers: Working as an Apprentice
6. Apprenticeship Answers: Putting Your Best Foot Forward

This is the sixth resource, Apprenticeship Answers: Putting Your Best Foot Forward.

# Apprenticeship Answers: Putting Your Best Foot Forward

**Contents:**

Skills for Success..... 3  
*Skills for Success in Learning* ..... 6

Soft Skills and the Skills for Success ..... 8

Working With Other People ..... 9  
*When Things Change*..... 11  
*Activity – Getting to the Bottom of Change* ..... 13  
*Getting Ahead of Problems* ..... 14  
*Activity – Anticipating Problems* ..... 15  
*When You’re Faced with a Problem* ..... 16

Building Your Creativity ..... 17

Asking Questions..... 19  
*Activity – Getting the Information You Need* ..... 22

Non-Verbal Communication ..... 24  
*Activity – Body Language and Facial Expression*..... 25

Looking After Yourself Outside of Work ..... 27  
*Activity – Looking Out For Number One*..... 28  
*Next steps*..... 29

## Skills for Success

The Skills for Success are the skills apprentices (and everyone!) need to do well in learning, work and life. There are nine of them.

### 1. Adaptability

Adaptability is the skill you use when things change. If you can stay positive, learn new ways of doing things, overcome challenges, and stay focused when unexpected things happen, you are adaptable.

As an apprentice, you will need to show adaptability when learning to do things differently than you may have in the past, getting feedback from your employer on ways to improve your work, or changing work plans to meet the needs of a customer.

### 2. Collaboration

Working with other people in a positive way is collaboration. If you can help other people and accept help from them while sharing work with them, you are a good collaborator.

As an apprentice, you will need to show collaboration skills by being a good employee and team member. You will need to accept direction from your employer and work with other members of your team to meet deadlines, complete projects, and help the business you're working for succeed.

### 3. Communication

Speaking with, listening to and interacting with people is communication. If you can pay attention to others, think about and understand what they say, and share information with them clearly, you are a good communicator.

As an apprentice, you will need to show strong communication skills during both your on-the-job and in-school training. You will communicate with your employer and team, talk about how to complete tasks, and share information with customers.

#### 4. Creativity and Innovation

Creativity and innovation refers to thinking about things in new and different ways. If you use your imagination to come up with interesting ideas and think about how things *could be* instead of how they are, you are showing creativity and innovation.

As an apprentice, you will need to show these skills when learning new and better ways of doing things, developing new products, and coming up with different ways to promote or deliver your services.

#### 5. Digital Skills

Digital skills are needed to work with computers, mobile devices, software and apps. If you can find, create and use digital documents and spreadsheets, and also find, create and share information safely online, that demonstrates you have digital skills.

As an apprentice, you will need digital skills to order supplies, track shipments, communicate with coworkers and customers, and use the technology and software related to your chosen trade.

#### 6. Numeracy

Numeracy is the ability to understand and use math. If you can add, subtract, multiply, divide, and use fractions and decimals comfortably, and you understand how mathematical equations work, you are demonstrating numeracy skills.

As an apprentice, you will need many numeracy skills to figure out what supplies you need for a job, measure the spaces or products you are working with, manage a budget, calculate taxes, and provide estimates for customers.

#### 7. Problem Solving

Identifying issues, thinking about why they are happening, coming up with solutions, and making decisions are all part of problem solving. If you are drawn to fixing things when they are broken, solving puzzles or mysteries, or helping people who disagree with one another come up with a compromise, you are a problem-solver.

As an apprentice, you will need to solve problems when you spot issues with workplace tools or processes, when machines break down or you don't have the supplies you need, or when you face a challenge with co-workers or customers.

## 8. Reading

Reading is more than just looking at letters on a page. It is your ability to find, understand and use information presented through words, symbols and images. If you can find information on forms and drawings, and read and understand emails, reports, news articles, blog posts and instructions easily, you are a good reader.

As an apprentice, you will need strong reading skills to understand your Apprenticeship Training Standard and Apprenticeship Curriculum Standard. You will also need to be able to read instruction manuals, text books, policies, safety information, and review notes and emails from your employer, co-workers, and customers.

## 9. Writing

Writing refers to your ability to share information using written words, symbols and images. If you can write emails, reports, instructions and social media posts in a way that makes them easy for others to understand and gets your point across clearly, you are a good writer.

As an apprentice, you will need writing skills to fill out forms and applications, write essays and tests during the in-class portion of your training, and communicate clearly and professionally when writing to customers, co-workers and your employer.

**Discussion:**

Which of the Skills for Success do you think is the most important for an apprentice? Why?

## Skills for Success in Learning

As an apprentice, you will be learning constantly. You will learn from the employer who sponsors you, from your classroom teachers, and from your co-workers. You will also learn from your own mistakes, so you can do things differently next time. Part of being a successful apprentice is being open and eager to learn new things.

To be a good learner, you will need **all** of the Skills for Success. Think about when someone is teaching you how to complete a task on-the-job, or when you're learning something in a classroom. Provide an example of how you will need to show each of these skills while you are learning.

How will you use **Adaptability** as you learn?

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How will you use **Collaboration** as you learn?

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How will you use **Communication** as you learn?

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How will you use **Creativity and Innovation** as you learn?

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How will you use **Digital Skills** as you learn?

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How will you use **Numeracy** as you learn?

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How will you use **Problem Solving** as you learn?

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How will you use **Reading** as you learn?

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How will you use **Writing** as you learn?

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## Soft Skills and the Skills for Success

What do you think of when you hear the phrase “put your best foot forward”?

It usually means making a good impression on other people – impressing them, and when it comes to work, also showing that you would be a valuable member of a team.

Many of the behaviours that make a good impression on others are called “soft skills,” “people skills,” “interpersonal skills,” or “21<sup>st</sup> century skills.” These skills aren’t related to how much you know but are related more to how you think and act.

Many of these are Skills for Success, including:

-  Adaptability
-  Collaboration
-  Communication
-  Creativity and innovation
-  Problem solving

Being able to display these skills, along with a willingness to learn and a good work ethic, can help you be very successful both as an apprentice and throughout your career in the skilled trades.

Let’s look at how these specific skills are used in your apprenticeship journey. Watch for the symbols for each of these Skills for Success as you complete this resource!



## Working With Other People



There are very few jobs that don't involve working with other people. Even someone who owns their own business and works alone needs to get along with customers who have different opinions and ways of communicating. As an apprentice, you will work for an employer and will likely have both coworkers and classmates to work with. Being able to work with others is an extremely important part of being a successful apprentice.

Think about someone you worked with in the past who you really liked having as a classmate or coworker. What did they do that made you want to be around them?

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These are all traits that make someone a strong collaborator. Other traits that make someone a good teammate are that they:

- Can be trusted
- Show up on time
- Are encouraging and supportive
- Appreciate and respect different cultures, religions, values and abilities
- Welcome different points of view
- Change the way they communicate so others can understand them
- Help others overcome conflicts and arguments
- Support their coworkers and celebrate their strengths
- Involve everyone in conversations and discussions
- Do what they say they are going to do
- Appreciate feedback and suggestions from others

Which of these traits do you have?

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Provide an example of when you showed these traits at work.

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Which of these traits would you like to work on?

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Which of the Skills for Success does this section focus on? \_\_\_\_\_

## When Things Change



When something doesn't go the way you want, or unexpected changes happen, it can be very frustrating. Being able to handle changes without "blowing up" is part of putting your best foot forward. It doesn't mean that you don't feel annoyed or upset, but it does mean that you handle these feelings in a positive way. It also means you can focus on adapting to that change and bouncing back from the uncomfortable feelings it may cause. There are some tricks you can use to handle changes, whether at work, at school or at home.

When changes do happen, don't react immediately. Often our first reaction is to lash out in frustration, or reject the change completely because change can be uncomfortable. Pause and think about **what happened** and **why it happened** first.

### What happened?

An important first step in dealing with change is understanding it fully. When someone tells you that things are changing they may say a lot of things, including who caused it, when it's going to happen, who the change is affecting, what you'll need to do differently, and for how long. They may also complain about the change and tell you why they think it's bad.

The key message – what the actual change is – can get lost. The first step to take is to write the change down, leaving all of the extra details out. See if you can describe the change in only five words or less.

Then, ask these questions about how the change affects you.

- Is it a small change that doesn't have much of an impact on you?
- Is it a change that will make your job easier or better in the long run?
- Is it a change that causes your work to take longer or could mean you need to learn a new or more difficult way of doing things?

It's best not to react until you know what the change is and how it affects you.

## Why did it happen?

Some changes happen because they have to. An employer may ask you to change the way you work to meet a new safety standard, to prioritize an important task, or because there's been an update made to the products or tools you use in your work. Changing the way we do things can be uncomfortable, but it's often necessary. Accepting that and figuring out how to adapt to the change is an important skill to have. It is part of being a lifelong learner.

Some changes happen because there are different, and sometimes better, ways of doing things. This can occur when new staff or a new supervisor joins a team, bringing new ideas with them. **It's a good time to remind yourself that change doesn't have to be bad.** Some of the best new and innovative ideas come from deciding to change the way things have been done in the past.



Asking why a change is being made can help you adapt and adjust to it. Use your communication skills to talk to your employer and your team in a calm manner to find out more about what caused the change.

This is a good time to talk about what other changes might happen as a result. Sometimes changes make things better and easier, and sometimes they make things harder. When changes happen it's important that everyone involved understand the consequences.

Which of the Skills for Success does this section focus on? \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion:

Can you think of a time when something changed, and it ended up making things better instead of harder or more challenging? Share your experience with others.

**Activity – Getting to the Bottom of Change**

Read the scenario and figure out what happened, why it happened, and what other changes might happen as a result. Then, answer the questions below.

Your coworker at the bakery says they're worried about not being able to keep up with orders because starting today the head baker wants everyone to mix bread dough by hand instead of using the electric mixer. They complain about how much harder it is to make dough that way and talk about how much more time it takes to knead the dough by hand. They think the head baker wants the bakery to be more "old world", and that's why they're telling staff to knead the dough by hand. They tell you they've been looking for the attachments for the electric mixer, but they've been removed. Another coworker says the bakery started using a new flour for dough, and the attachments were removed because they're getting caught in the electric mixer. The head baker calls the kitchen team together and lets everyone know that the attachments for the mixer have tested positive for lead and had to be removed for health reasons. They have ordered new stainless-steel attachments and assure everyone they will only knead dough by hand until the new parts arrive in two days.

What happened? See if you can write it down in five words or less!

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Why did it happen?

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What other changes might happen as a result?

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Is this a positive change, or a challenging one?     Positive     Challenging

Is this change necessary?     Yes     No

## Getting Ahead of Problems



Before you begin a task, think about what sort of problems could occur that might affect you or stop you from finishing the job. If you make a list of things that could happen, you can also think about what you can do to either respond to that problem or change, or prevent it from happening in the first place.

For example, if what you were trying to do was repaint a room, you might anticipate these problems:

1. You run out of paint before you're done the job.
2. The colour you choose doesn't go with the furniture in the room.
3. You don't have the supplies you need for the job.
4. You drop paint on the carpet or floor while doing the job.

Thinking about those problems in advance means you can create a plan to avoid them. For example, you can:

1. Measure the height and width of the walls you want to paint and calculate the area you need to cover. Then, talk to the paint store about how much you'll need and buy extra.
2. Bring home a few samples of paint colours you like, and hold them up to all the furniture in the room. Then, pick the one that goes best with the furniture.
3. Do some research on the kinds of supplies you need to paint a room. Make a list of what you need and compare it to what you already have. Then, borrow or buy what you're missing.
4. Cover the carpet or floor with a drop cloth and tape it down, so even if you spill paint it won't stain them.

**Activity – Anticipating Problems**

Think about something you would like to accomplish, and write it in the chart on the next page. Then write down three problems that could happen which would stop you from completing this task. Finally, write down at least one thing you can do to either prevent each of those problems from happening in the first place, or make the situation better if you can't prevent it.

| What am I trying to do? | What could stop me? | What can I do to prevent that problem, or fix it if I can't prevent it? |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---|
|                         |                     |   |
|                         |                     |   |
|                         |                     |   |

It's easy to get frustrated when things change in ways we don't expect. Anticipating problems before they happen means they won't surprise you if (or when) they do.



## When You're Faced with a Problem



Even when you plan ahead to avoid problems, the unexpected can happen. When problems occur, it's time to go into problem-solving mode! There are lots of things to think about and decisions to make when you are trying to solve a problem. For example:

- Figure out exactly what the problem is. Just like we did when deciding “what happened” when something changed, try to get to the bottom of the problem by describing it in five words or less.
- Recognize that setbacks happen to everyone and that the only way to succeed is to keep trying.
- Look at what skills you have to fix the situation and what other people or support you can call on for help.
- Decide whether it's worth continuing to try the same thing you've been doing, or if it's time to try something new.
- Picture yourself getting through the situation and having a positive outcome.
- Make a plan to overcome the problem.
- Decide what to do first.
- When it's all over, reflect on what went well and what you'd like to change if the situation happens again.

Which of the Skills for Success does this section focus on? \_\_\_\_\_

## Building Your Creativity



You may think of creativity as being related to art. But it isn't about painting, drawing, or writing a poem – it's actually about the way you think. In fact, creativity and innovation are closely connected to problem solving. Have you heard the phrase “think outside the box”? People who can do that are creative thinkers... they don't see the world as something that stays the same but as something that can change and grow.

Creativity is something you can learn, just like you can learn how to drive a car, use a computer or bake bread. How can you develop creativity and innovative thinking skills? Try some of the following activities and see how your creativity grows!

### Imagine how things could be different

On your way to work or school, think about how things would change if everyone had flying cars. What if there were slingshots to send people where they need to go? It doesn't matter if the idea is unrealistic or silly – think about it anyway. How would these things change your trip to work? How would they change the world around you?

### Learn new things and seek out new experiences

Have you ever visited a place where the language you speak isn't common? Have you ever tried a sport, hobby or activity you've never done before? Have you visited a place where people from another religion or culture live? Even learning 10 words in a language you don't speak can help you see the world around you differently.

### Be open to new ideas without judging them

Being around people who think and act like we do is comfortable and doesn't challenge us to grow. Put yourself in a situation where you can speak with people who don't think like you do. Be quiet and listen. Even if you don't agree with their point of view, recognizing the differences in how people see the world can help grow your creative brain.

**Challenge traditional ways of doing things or seeing the world**

We often do things the way we are taught and carry the same perspectives and points of view as people we know. Recognize when you're doing things "because that's how they've always been done" and look at alternatives. How would people accomplish the same task if they didn't have the tools and resources you do? How does the world look different to them?

**Ask questions even when there's no clear answer**

Asking questions that don't seem to have an answer used to be a job for philosophers, but you can do it too. Either in your own mind or out loud with other people, start asking questions that start with "what if..." and "what caused..." or "why do people...", then see where your imagination or other people's answers take you.

**Put yourself in situations where you don't know what will happen next**

Exposing yourself to unpredictable things is a great way to grow both your creativity and your adaptability. Go for a walk and decide what way to turn by flipping a coin. You'll practice adapting to the unknown while discovering some interesting new places in your neighbourhood!

**Be okay with failure and learn from it**

Failure is hard – it's something we usually avoid at all costs. It is also an incredible opportunity to learn, especially in a safe environment. Bring out a board game, download a new video game or grab a deck of cards and challenge someone to play. No one masters a game the first time they try it – the game would be boring if they did. Recognize that failure is okay and figure out what you learned from it so you can be better the next time you play.

Choose two things you want to do to help grow your creativity. Describe them below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the Skills for Success does this section focus on? \_\_\_\_\_

## Asking Questions



When learning any new skill, job or trade, it's important to ask questions. Many people feel nervous asking questions. They may think that it makes them look like they aren't smart, or they feel like they are bothering their trainer or co-worker by taking up time with questions.

Having a question and not getting the answer can lead to bad decisions. It may cause safety issues where someone gets hurt, unhappy customers because the work isn't well done, or stressed apprentices that don't feel confident in what they are doing.

Many people don't know how to ask questions, and they waste time trying to find the information they are looking for on their own. They might also guess and end up being wrong.

Asking questions the right way can help you get fast and effective answers that will make you a better employee. Here are four ways to ask effective questions.

### 1. Don't Ask Yes or No Questions

Questions that start with the words "would," "should," "is," "are," and "do you think" are all yes or no questions. They will get you an answer, but it might not tell you all the information you need. Questions that start with "who," "what," "where," "when," "how," or "why" lead to people giving some thought to their answers and provide much more information.

When you are apprenticing in the skilled trades, you will want to ask 'open-ended' questions. Those are questions that don't necessarily just have one simple right or wrong answer. Asking open-ended questions means that your employer can give you all the information they feel you need to know. By using an open-ended question, you might also get information you didn't even know you needed.

Some examples of open-ended questions include, "How would you deal with a difficult client?" or "Why do we do this step first?"

## 2. Dig Deeper

Always consider using follow-up questions. Once you've gotten the answer to your first question, ask a follow up question such as, "What makes you say that?" or "Why do you think that?"

Let's say that you are talking to your supervisor and need to know details of a specific job or task. Your supervisor tells you that one of the suppliers has been very difficult to work with. You will want to follow up on that comment. Ask a question like "What makes them difficult to work with?" This will lead you to specific facts. It may not be because the supplier has a bad attitude. It might just be that they are hard to get hold of by phone.

Follow up questions give you the facts and let you make your own opinions about things.

## 3. Use the Power of Silence

Start getting comfortable with asking a question, waiting for response, listening to the response and then waiting some more. Sometimes the person you are questioning has more information and will provide it when you wait for it.

You have to be comfortable with that silent period before they open up. Police officers use silence very well. People feel a need to fill the holes in the conversation, and often they will then bring out the bits of information you need.

## 4. Don't Interrupt

Don't interrupt the person who is talking. First, it tells the person you don't value what they are saying. Interrupting stops their train of thought and directs the conversation the way you want, not necessarily the way it should go.

Ask your question, then let the person answer it in full. Listen fully to what they are saying and use that to direct them back to the topic in the next question when there is a natural pause.

*Adapted from How to Be Amazingly Good at Asking Questions*

<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/how-amazingly-good-asking-questions.html>

Which of the Skills for Success does this section focus on? \_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion:**

When do you find it difficult to ask questions?

Why is it better to ask an open-ended question than a yes or no question?

What kinds of questions do you think you'll ask your employer when you're an apprentice?

**Activity – Getting the Information You Need**



Below are the stories of three apprentices who need to get information to solve a problem. Decide what information the apprentice needs to know and why. Write down one or more questions that each person can ask to find the info they need.

**1.** A Brick and Stone Mason apprentice doesn't know what their role is at the job site tomorrow, what they should bring with them or how to sign out tools.

What information do they need?

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Why do they need this information?

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What questions can the apprentice ask to find out what they need to know?

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**2.** A Special Events Coordinator apprentice is going to see a client who is difficult to work with. They want to make sure they know what's happened with this client in the past so they can communicate and act professionally on the job. They are nervous.

What information do they need?

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Why do they need this information?

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What questions can the apprentice ask to find out what they need to know?

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**3.** A Construction Craft Worker apprentice is frustrated. They feel like they are doing extra work on the job because some of their coworkers aren't doing their share.

What information do they need?

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Why do they need this information?

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What questions can the apprentice ask to find out what they need to know?

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Which of the Skills for Success does this section focus on? \_\_\_\_\_



## Non-Verbal Communication



As an apprentice, you may sometimes be working at different job sites or workplaces. When you go to a job site or into a workplace, you are representing the company you work for. You will try to speak professionally, follow the rules and do good work. These things all tell people a lot about you and the company you work for. What do your facial expressions and body language tell clients, co-workers and your employer?

Most of us realize slouching, fidgeting, rolling our eyes or frowning can be things we do without realizing it or out of habit. Small gestures like these can tell the client or employer you are nervous or lack confidence. Clients can jump to the wrong conclusion and think you aren't interested in their business. No one wins when this happens, and it can truly leave a mark on you and the employer you work for.

That means body language and facial expressions are something we need to become aware of and possibly change. You want to promote trust and professionalism at all times to your customer. This is done in the way we dress, the way we stand and how we communicate – both with our words and when not speaking at all.

Every workplace is different. It's not suggested that you wear a business suit to do residential plumbing, but think about how the customer feels if you walk through their house without protecting their floor from your dirty boots. What impression does it make if you don't look them in the eye when they are talking? When you walk in with your head held high, confident and friendly, it will pay off. Your body language guarantees it!

### Discussion:

What facial expressions stand out the most to you when you look at other people?

Think about a time when, as a customer, you felt welcomed and appreciated. What sort of facial expressions or body language can you remember from that experience?

Think about a time when, as a customer, you felt like an interruption or an annoyance. What sort of facial expressions or body language can you remember from that experience?

**Activity – Body Language and Facial Expression**

Look at the photographs below, and think about what you think these people’s body language and facial expressions are saying. What does this silent communication say to clients? Then, answer the questions on the following page.



Who looks like they want to talk to you? \_\_\_\_\_

What gives you that impression? \_\_\_\_\_

Who looks bored? \_\_\_\_\_

What gives you that impression? \_\_\_\_\_

Who looks easy to approach? \_\_\_\_\_

What gives you that impression? \_\_\_\_\_

Who looks like they would take you seriously? \_\_\_\_\_

What gives you that impression? \_\_\_\_\_

Who looks like they are judging you? \_\_\_\_\_

What gives you that impression? \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the Skills for Success does this section focus on? \_\_\_\_\_

## Looking After Yourself Outside of Work



When we look after ourselves outside of work, we're better able to handle stress, adapt to change and solve problems at work. Some people need to get to the gym to blow off stress from work. Others need an hour with a good book to release stressful energy. Many people complain that they never have the time to do this.

It is important to invest time in yourself to make sure you are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy in all areas of your life. If you were in an airplane, you would put on your air mask first in an emergency so you would be able to help others. To be able to be a good family member, friend and employee, it is important to make time for yourself.

People often schedule time to meet with others. Schedule time to meet with yourself! If it makes you a better worker, partner and/or parent, it's worth doing. Even 15 minutes a day is enough to make you feel more relaxed and prepared for the next day or the next meeting.

Sometimes this is called "self-care", and it means different things to different people. It could include:

- waking up 15 minutes early to enjoy quiet time before everyone else wakes up
- reading a book
- having your hair or nails done
- meeting a friend for a drink
- listening to music
- volunteering in your community for a cause you care about
- going for a walk
- having a bath
- watching your favourite sports team

### Activity – Looking Out For Number One

Self-care means making sure you are healthy so that you can take care of others, participate in your community and be a good employee. This activity is all about reflecting. Answer the questions below.

1. What are some ways that you look after yourself outside of work?

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2. How long do you spend taking care of yourself every week?

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3. If you had more time, what other things would you do to practice self-care? How can you make time for these things?

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4. Who benefits in your life when you take care of yourself?

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Share your answers with a tutor, instructor or classmate. Then, interview them. Ask them the same questions you just asked yourself and write their answers on the following page.

Who did you interview? \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are some ways they look after themselves outside of work?

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2. How long do they spend taking care of themselves every week?

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3. If they had more time, what other things would they do to practice self-care? How did they think they would make time for these things?

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4. Who benefits when they take care of themselves?

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Which of the Skills for Success does this section focus on? \_\_\_\_\_

### Next steps

You have completed the last resource in the Apprenticeship Answers series! You have learned a lot and are ready to work on the skills you need to be successful in the skilled trades. Revisit this resource and the others in the series whenever you want to refresh your skills and prepare for your apprenticeship.