



Transversal skills

A Beginner's Guide To 21st Century Skills



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Definition

The skills individuals have which are relevant to jobs and occupations other than the ones they currently have or have recently had. These skills may also have been acquired through non-work or leisure activities or through participation in education or training.

More generally, these are skills which have been learned in one context or to master a special situation/problem and can be transferred to another context. The term ‘transversal skills’ has largely replaced the term ‘transferable skills’.

Transversal skills are part of what we refer to as the “21st century skills”. The term includes a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed —by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today’s world, particularly in collegiate programs and contemporary careers and workplaces. Generally speaking, 21st century skills can be applied in all academic subject areas, and in all educational, career, and civic settings throughout a student’s life.

21st century skills

It should be noted that the “21st century skills” concept encompasses a wide-ranging and amorphous body of knowledge and skills that is not easy to define and that has not been officially codified or categorized. While the term is widely used in education, it is not always defined consistently, which can lead to confusion and divergent interpretations. In addition, a number of related terms—including applied skills, cross-curricular skills, cross-disciplinary skills, interdisciplinary skills, transferable skills, transversal skills, non-cognitive skills, and soft skills, among others—are also widely used in reference to the general forms of knowledge and skill commonly associated with 21st century skills. While these different terms may not be strictly synonymous, and they may have divergent or specialized meanings in certain technical contexts, these diverse sets of skills are being addressed in this one entry for the purposes of practicality and usefulness.

While the specific skills deemed to be “21st century skills” may be defined, categorized, and determined differently from person to person, place to place, or school to school, the term does reflect a general—if somewhat loose and shifting—consensus. The following list provides a brief illustrative overview of the knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits commonly associated with 21st century skills:

Critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, synthesizing information

Research skills and practices, interrogative questioning Creativity, artistry, curiosity, imagination, innovation, personal expression

Perseverance, self-direction, planning, self-discipline, adaptability, initiative

Oral and written communication, public speaking and presenting, listening

Leadership, teamwork, collaboration, cooperation, facility in using virtual workspaces

Information and communication technology (ITC) literacy, media and internet literacy, data interpretation and analysis, computer programming

Civic, ethical, and social-justice literacy

Economic and financial literacy, entrepreneurialism Global awareness, multicultural literacy, humanitarianism

Scientific literacy and reasoning, the scientific method Environmental and conservation literacy, ecosystems understanding

Health and wellness literacy, including nutrition, diet, exercise, and public health and safety

Source: Cedefop (2008a). European Training Thesaurus. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3049_en.pdf



2. Next to each person put a number between 1 and 7 (where 1 is the least and 7 is the most) to characterize the degree to which you care about or feel empathy for this person. 3. No one will be looking at or checking your answers, so be as introspective as you can. It is unlikely that you care about every person to the same degree.

4. In the next column, next to any person with a rating of 5 or more, describe what is on your mind when you are empathising with that person.

5. For example, are you trying to imagine what their thoughts are, how they are feeling, do you feel protective towards them, do you feel sensitive to their needs, etc.?

6. Next to any person with a rating of 4 or less, in the final column write down a strategy for how you could increase your care or empathy for that person.

NAME

LEVEL OF EMPATHY (1-7)

WHAT IS ON YOUR MIND

STRATEGY

Tips and potential difficulties

- ▶ Empathy and strategies for action have been grouped together because it is important to stimulate willingness to undertake some activity as a consequence of reflection, with the aim of making a positive contribution.
- ▶ Most of the time, empathy and care for the people one interacts with, as well as intentions for action, are neutral. Becoming aware of one's own level of empathy and moving it in positive directions will improve the baseline capacity to use empathy. Debriefing/reflecting
- ▶ Could you easily think of people to list in the table? Did you easily move your attention away from yourself and your own attributes?
- ▶ Did your interest in others increase as a result of this activity



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