



Module: Navigating the Workplace

This module covers how to manage daily work tasks, understand workplace expectations, grow in your role, and manage common workplace challenges.

About CanWork BC

CanWork BC aims to make it easier for youth with disabilities ages 15 to 30 years old to find and keep employment. There are a series of tools and resources for youth, employers, service providers, educators, and caregivers.

CanAssist at the University of Victoria, with the support of the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, wrote the Provincial Employment Strategy for Youth with Disabilities (ESYD). This strategy informed the tools and resources.

The Youth Tool

The CanWork BC youth tool is available as an interactive online platform at portal.canworkbc.ca and through PDF workbooks such as this one. There are five dimensions of content available.

For the full PDF workbook content and accompanying facilitator guides, as well as other CanWork BC tools and resources, go to canworkbc.ca.

Introduction

This module has three sections to help you understand workplace standards and challenges. You'll explore:

- Exploring workplace standards, including behavior and communication.
- Practicing growth strategies such as task management and skill development.
- Identifying ways to handle workplace challenges, like problem-solving and seeking support.

Each section will take around 15-30 minutes to complete, and you're welcome to take breaks in between.

Each section has activities that connect employment essentials to your own life to make sure this is useful for you. Be prepared to think about and record your answers in whatever way works best. That could be writing your answers in this workbook or using a different format that works for you like voice recording or typing in a notes app.

At the end of the module, you'll have the chance to put what you've learned into practice with reflection questions. Let's get started!

Section 1: Navigating Workplace Standards

Understanding workplace standards is key to your success and happiness on the job. It shapes how you interact with others, how you handle tasks, and how you feel in your work environment.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Demonstrating professional behavior.
- Learning about workplace culture.
- Building clear communication skills.
- Managing accommodation requests.

By the end of this module, you will have a better understanding of ways you can build positive relationships with coworkers and how you can adapt to different workplace cultures, making it easier to work in different settings.

Engage and Explore

Workplace Standards

Understanding workplace standards is essential for success in any job. These standards shape your interactions with others and help you grow in your role.

Professional behavior

Professional behavior is key to success at work. It helps create a positive environment and builds trust with coworkers and supervisors, leading to stronger teamwork. Examples of professional behavior include:

Behaviour	Description
Respect	Treat everyone kindly, no matter their role. Simple acts like saying "please" and "thank you" show respect to both coworkers and supervisors.
Reliability	Be dependable. If you commit to doing something, make sure you follow through and complete the task. For example, if you agree to finish a task by a deadline, try to get it done on time. If you're not sure you can finish it on time, let your supervisor or manager know before the deadline so you can adjust the plan together.
Punctuality	Always arrive on time for work and meetings. This shows that you respect other people's time and that you are professional.

Appropriate dress	Dress according to the company's dress code. For example, if it's business casual, wear clothes that align with that standard.
Following rules	Follow workplace policies and guidelines. Take the time to read the employee handbook so you understand the rules.
Accepting feedback	Be open to feedback and take helpful criticism calmly. See it as a chance to grow and ask questions to show that you want to learn. Everyone makes mistakes, and feedback helps you get better and build stronger relationships with your coworkers.

Workplace Culture

Workplace culture is the shared values, beliefs, and practices within a company. Understanding this culture is crucial for fitting in.

To adapt to workplace culture, take time to observe your surroundings. Ask questions if you're unsure about the expectations. Engaging with your team and participating in workplace activities can help you feel more integrated.

Here are some aspects of workplace culture to consider:

Aspect	Description
Shared values	Each workplace has specific values that guide behavior. For example, a company that values teamwork may encourage collaboration on projects.
Beliefs	These can affect how decisions are made. For example, a company that believes in innovation may support employees taking risks to propose new ideas.
Practices	Observe how things are done in the workplace. Are employees encouraged to socialize during breaks? Are meetings formal or casual?

Clear Communication

Effective communication is important in a work environment. Clear communication helps avoid misunderstandings and ensures everyone is on the same page.

Here's how to communicate clearly:

Approach	Description
Share your thoughts	Be open about your ideas and opinions. For example, if you have a suggestion for improving a process, don't hesitate to share it.
Listen actively	Pay attention when others speak. Show that you are listening by nodding or asking follow-up questions.
Use simple language	Avoid jargon or overly complicated terms, especially when explaining tasks. For example, instead of saying "utilize," you could say "use."
Confirm important points	After discussions, summarize key points in writing. For example, you could send a follow-up email after a meeting to recap what was discussed.

Updating Workplace Accommodation Needs

As you work, your needs may change because of new job duties or personal situations. It's important to check if your current accommodations are still helpful. Changes in responsibilities or life

events can affect what you need, so take time to consider how well your accommodations are working for you.

Steps to Approach Updating Workplace Accommodations:

- **Step 1: Assess your needs**

Check your current responsibilities to decide what changes are necessary.

- **Step 2: Discussing your needs**

Be clear and direct when discussing your needs with your supervisor or Human Resources. Provide specific details and suggest accommodations that would help you succeed, like extra time for tasks, a quieter workspace, or modified equipment.

- **Step 3: Provide documentation**

Be prepared to share any necessary medical or other information to support your request.

- **Step 4: Keep communication open**

Schedule regular check-ins with your supervisor to talk about your needs. Be honest about which accommodations are helping you and which are not.

Make it Personal

Workplace Scenarios

Let's look at some different examples of clear communication in action. In this activity, you will explore three different workplace scenarios. Read the scenario and think about what you would do. Then write down what you think would happen, based on the actions you think you would take. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you. If you need help check out the example answers at the end of the section.

Scenario 1

You recently received a diagnosis that requires you to use a special chair at work for better support. Your current chair is causing discomfort.

Question: What would you do?

Question: What do you think would happen?

Scenario 2

You've noticed that team communication has been lacking at work, leading to misunderstandings about project deadlines and responsibilities.

Question: What would you do?

Question: What do you think would happen?

Scenario 3

You have a high-priority task with a tight deadline. You realize it might be hard to finish on time.

Question: What would you do?

Question: What do you think would happen?

Workplace Scenario Example Answers

Scenario 1

- **What you could do:** You send an email to your manager explaining your diagnosis and requesting an ergonomic chair to help with your comfort while working.
- **What might happen:** Your manager responds positively and arranges for the new chair to be delivered to your workspace. You feel more comfortable and can focus better on your tasks.

Scenario 2

- **What you could do:** You propose a team communication plan that includes regular check-ins and updates. You share how these practices can enhance clarity and collaboration among team members.
- **What might happen:** The team adopts your proposed communication strategy, resulting in clearer expectations and improved teamwork, which leads to successful project completion.

Scenario 3

- **What you could do:** You talk to your supervisor about your worries. You set up a quick meeting and explain that you're doing your best but may need extra help to finish on time. You share your progress and suggest ways your supervisor could assist, like adjusting resources or extending the deadline.

- **What might happen:** Your supervisor appreciates your honesty and agrees to help. With their support, you complete the task successfully. This open communication strengthens your reliability and builds trust with your supervisor.

Section 2: Growing in Your Role

Understanding how to grow in your role is key to your success at work.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Understanding how to clarify expectations.
- Building your problem-solving skills.
- Identifying opportunities for professional development.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of how growth in your role can make the work more enjoyable and lead to new opportunities including promotions.

Engage and Explore

Growing in Your Role

As you settle into your new job, it's important to think about how you can grow in your role. Learning how to manage your responsibilities will help you build your skills and feel more confident. Read through the strategies to do this below.

Clarifying Expectations

Knowing what your job requires is essential for doing well. When you clearly understand your role, you can focus on what needs to be done.

- **Ask questions**

If you're unsure about your responsibilities, don't hesitate to ask your supervisor or coworkers.

- *Example: If your job description includes project management, you might ask, "Can you tell me more about the projects I'll be working on?"*

- **Set goals**

Write down clear goals for what you want to achieve.

- *Example: If you want to improve your communication skills, set a goal to share your ideas in team meetings once a month. This can help you practice and gain confidence.*

- **Review goals**

Regularly check in on your goals to see if you're making progress. Adjust them based on feedback or changes in your role.

- *Example: If you receive feedback that you need to work on teamwork, you might set a new goal to collaborate with a colleague on a project.*

Managing Tasks

Keeping track of your tasks can help make your work more manageable and reduce stress.

- **Prioritize**

Figure out which tasks are most important.

- *Example: If you have a report due tomorrow and a meeting next week, focus on finishing the report first to meet your deadline.*

- **Use tools**

Consider using planners, to-do lists, or apps (like Todoist or Trello) to keep your tasks organized. These tools can help you see what you need to do and when things are due.

- **Break it down**

Break larger tasks into smaller steps to make them easier to manage. Instead of just saying “write report,” you could break it down into steps like “research topic,” “create outline,” and “write draft.” This way, you can tackle each part one at a time.

Solving Problems

Challenges will come up at work, but knowing how to deal with them is key to your growth.

- **Stay calm**

When you face a problem, take a moment to breathe and think. For example, if a project is running late, staying calm allows you to step back, figure out what caused the delay, and plan a solution without making rushed decisions.

- **Think it through**

Explore different solutions. Sometimes talking to a coworker can give you new ideas. If you’re not sure how to solve a

conflict, you might say, “Can we sit down and talk about this together?”

- **Make a reference list**

Keep a list of common problems and solutions you’ve found helpful. This can be a useful guide for future challenges. For example, if you often struggle with time management, you could note successful strategies you've used before.

Professional Development Opportunities

Growing in your role means looking for ways to learn and improve your skills.

- **Look for training**

Check if your workplace has workshops, online courses, or mentorship programs.

- *Example: If you want to become a better leader, see if there's a training program for that.*

- **Seek feedback**

Regularly ask your supervisor for feedback on how you’re doing. If they point out areas where you can improve, see this as a chance to grow.

- *Example: If they suggest you enhance your technical skills, look for online courses that can help.*

- **Join professional groups**

Join groups related to your field. These organizations often offer networking opportunities, workshops, and useful industry insights.

- *Example: If you're in marketing, joining a marketing association can help you connect with others and learn new trends.*

Make it Personal

Skill Development Action Plan

Now that you've explored strategies to grow in your role, it's time to apply them to your own life. This activity will help you think about how to develop your skills, whether you are currently working or looking for a job.

Follow the steps below create a skill development action plan. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you. Use the examples to help you if needed.

Step 1: Choose a skill

What's a skill you want to get better at?

This could be something like leadership, communication, or technical skills.

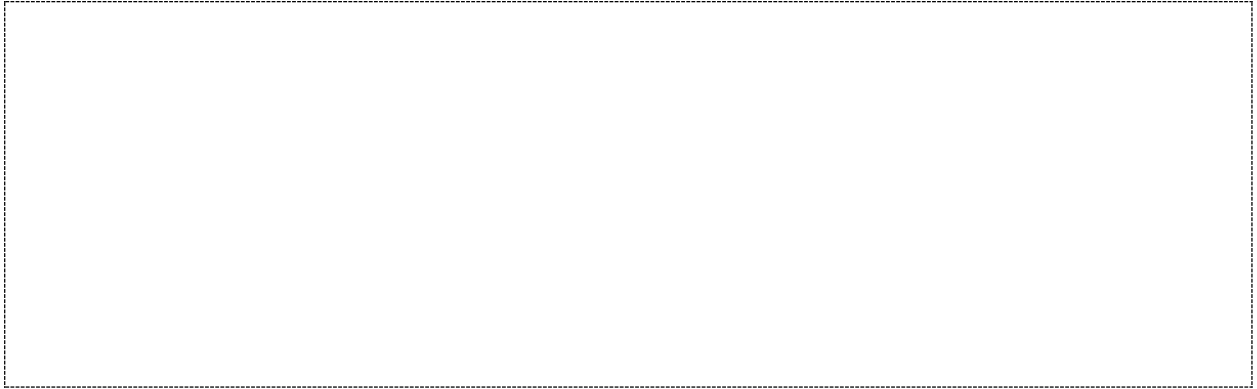
Question: What's a way to improve that skill?

Look for a learning opportunity like an online course, a workshop, or a mentor who can help you.

Step 2: Make a plan

How could you use what you learn in your current job or in the job you want in the future?

Example: Leading team meetings with more confidence.



Section 3: Managing Workplace Challenges

Learning to identify and manage conflicts not only improves your work environment but also helps you build skills that are valuable throughout your career.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Identifying challenges and breaking down problems to find solutions.
- Understanding how to communicate effectively.
- Reflecting on outcomes and finding support when we need it.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding on how to positively manage conflict with coworkers and how to look for solutions in a way that creates a more positive work experience for you and others.

Engage and Explore

Managing Workplace Challenges

Workplace challenges are a normal part of any job. Knowing how to manage them well can help you work better and feel happier at your job. Read through the steps for managing workplace challenges below.

Identifying Challenges

Recognizing what challenges you face is the first step to managing them. Here are some common challenges:

- **Communication issues**

Misunderstandings can happen if people do not share information clearly.

- *Example: If a team member doesn't explain a project well, others may not know what to do.*

- **Time management**

Sometimes, you might feel rushed or overwhelmed with deadlines.

- *Example: If you have multiple tasks due at the same time, it can be hard to focus.*

- **Conflicts with coworkers**

Conflicts can arise from different working styles or personalities.

- *Example: If you prefer to work alone but have a team project, it might lead to tension.*

Breaking Down Problems

Once you identify a challenge, breaking it down can help make it easier to manage.

Here's how:

- **Write it down**

Start by writing down the problem to understand it better.

- *Example: If a project is late, list the reasons why, such as delays, not enough resources, or unclear instructions. This helps you see the issue clearly and think about solutions. Keeping a problem journal can also help you notice patterns over time.*

- **List steps to take**

Break the problem into smaller steps to make it easier to manage.

- *Example:*
 - **Create a schedule:** Use a planner or app to set times for each task.
 - **Prioritize tasks:** Figure out which tasks are most important. If you have a report due soon and a meeting next week, finish the report first.
 - **Set deadlines:** Give each smaller task a deadline to help you stay on track.

- **Focus on one thing at a time**

Work on each step one at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

- *Example: If you need to write a report and prepare a presentation, focus only on the report until it's done. Once you complete one task, move on to the next. This way, you make steady progress without getting distracted.*

Exploring Ways to Solve Challenges

After breaking down the problem, think of ways to solve it. Consider these options:

- **Talk to someone**

Discuss the challenge with a coworker or supervisor. They may offer helpful advice or new ideas. If you're unsure how to complete a task or struggling, don't hesitate to ask for help. Talking to someone can really make a difference.

- **Explore different approaches**

Look for different ways to help you handle the situation.

- *Example: If communication is a problem, you might send emails instead of having meetings to share updates. This can help you communicate more clearly and keep everyone informed.*

- **Try new tools and resources**

Look for new tools that can help you manage your tasks better. If keeping track of what you need to do is difficult, consider using apps or creating written lists. Writing things down helps you see what needs to be done and keeps you focused on your goals.

Now, imagine you're facing the below challenges at work. Each challenge is numbered. Write the number in the box labeled 'Helpful' or 'Not Helpful' (or record them in a notes app or another digital format that works for you) based on which you think it is.

Use the strategies below to guide you and check your answers with the answer key at the end of the section.

1. Write down the main problem and list possible reasons for it.
2. Ask a coworker or supervisor for their advice or help.
3. Hope the situation improves over time, even without any changes.
4. Stick with your approach, even if the situation gets worse.
5. Break the problem into smaller tasks and prioritize what to do first.
6. Try to handle all tasks at once.

Helpful	Not Helpful

Communicate Effectively

Communication is key to managing workplace challenges. Here are some tips to help you communicate effectively:

- **Be clear**

When you share information, use simple language.

- *Example: Instead of saying, "I need this ASAP," say, "I need this by Friday."*

- **Listen actively**

Pay attention when others speak. If a coworker shares feedback, show that you understand by summarizing their points.

- **Ask questions**

If you're unsure about something, ask questions. For example, "Can you explain what you mean by that?"

For more tips on clear communication, check out the *Starting a New Job* module in this dimension.

Reflect on Future Learning

After handling a challenge, take time to reflect on what you learned. This can help you in the future. Here are some tips to help you:

- **Think about what worked**

Think about what strategies helped you solve the problem.

- *Example: Did talking to a coworker help clarify your thoughts?*

- **Think about what didn't work**

Consider what you could have done differently. If a solution didn't work, think about why it failed.

- **Write it down**

Keep a journal of challenges and solutions. This can be a helpful reference for future problems.

Seeking Support When Needed

Don't hesitate to ask for help. It's okay to seek support from others. Here are some ways to do this:

- **Talk to your supervisor**

Share challenges with your supervisor. They may offer helpful guidance or resources.

- **Join support groups**

Look for workplace groups or forums where colleagues share experiences and advice.

- **Seek training**

If you need to improve a skill, consider taking a course or workshop.

- *Example: If communication is difficult, improving these skills can help.*

The reflection journal below helps you think about challenges you've faced recently. These challenges could have happened at work, school, or in your personal life. By looking back at these

experiences, you can learn what worked well, what didn't, and what you can do differently in the future.

Follow the steps below and write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you. Use the examples to help you if needed.

Step 1: Think of a recent challenge

Pick a challenge you faced in the last month. This could be something about managing your time, communicating with others, or any situation that needed solving.

Questions to consider: What was the challenge? Who was involved? How did it impact you or others?

- *Example: I had multiple deadlines at work, and I found myself overwhelmed.*



Step 2: Record how you responded

Reflect on what you did to address this challenge.

Questions to consider: What steps did you take to manage the issue? Did you ask for help, try to break down the problem, or look for alternative solutions?

- *Example: I tried to do everything at once, which stressed me out. Eventually, I made a schedule to prioritize my tasks.*

Step 3: Check the effectiveness

Assess whether your approach resolved the issue or if there were aspects you would like to improve.

Questions to Consider: Did your strategy work as you hoped? Why or why not? Were there unintended results?

- *Example: When I focused on one task at a time, I felt more in control and completed my work faster.*

Step 4: Consider what you'd do differently

Think about how you might approach a similar challenge in the future.

Questions to Consider: Based on this experience, would you manage a similar situation differently next time? What strategies would you change or keep?

- *Example: Next time, I would prioritize tasks earlier to avoid feeling rushed and might ask my supervisor for help with overlapping deadlines.*

Reflect and Connect

Great work! We've covered a lot in this module including:

- Know what's expected at work, like how to act and communicate with others.
- Learn how to grow in your role by managing tasks, setting goals, and building your skills.
- Find ways to deal with work problems and ask for help when needed.

Take a moment to think about the questions below and how they relate to your experiences. Write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you. Think of this as a reflective journal for yourself, which you can refer to later.

Happy reflecting!

How can you make sure you understand what is expected of you in a role?

What strategies help you stay organized and on top of your tasks?

What are some professional behaviors you think are most important in the workplace?

How can you aim to be reliable when working under tight deadlines or facing challenging tasks?

What would help you stay motivated to keep improving, even if progress feels slow?

Think of a challenge you faced at work, school, or in a volunteer role. How did you handle it? Did you seek help from anyone?

Exploring Ways to Solve Challenges Answers

Helpful

- 1. Write down the main problem and list possible reasons for it.
- 2. Ask a coworker or supervisor for their advice or help.
- 5. Break the problem into smaller tasks and prioritize what to do first.

Not helpful

- 3. Hope the situation improves over time, even without any changes.
- 4. Stick with your approach, even if the situation gets worse.
- 6. Try to handle all tasks at once.

Keep Going

There is so much more to learn! Access the full CanWork BC content and learn more about the program at **canworkbc.ca**.

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