



# Factsheet 20

## Key Skills

### What are key skills?

Key skills are the basic skills people use every day when carrying out all kinds of tasks and activities, whether at work, during training or at home. They are skills which are essential to success in nearly all areas of life and can be utilised in all job and training situations.

Key skills qualifications are designed to help you develop these basic skills and collect evidence to prove competence while working towards a nationally recognised qualification.

Key skills are divided into six areas:

- *Application of number*
- *Communication*
- *Information technology*
- *Working with others*
- *Improving own learning and performance*
- *Problem solving*

Each of these skills areas is available as a nationally recognised qualification accredited at levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

### KEY SKILLS LEVELS

**Level 1** describes the skills that people use in routine situations and tasks that occur regularly at work

**Level 2** asks people to take more responsibility for some of the decisions about how to apply key skills

**Level 3** has more complex activities that involve reasoning and more personal responsibility for organising and carrying out tasks using key skills

**Levels 4 & 5** are generally for people with management or strategic responsibilities in an organisation

### How do key skills help at work?

Changes in work and technology mean that you need more than just the technical skills needed to do a job. Employers are looking for people who can:

- ✓ communicate well, both when speaking and writing
- ✓ use numbers to do calculations, pricing and measurements
- ✓ use new technology
- ✓ get on with other people and work as part of a team
- ✓ manage their own work, think about how they can improve and are keen to learn
- ✓ show initiative and recognise and solve problems



### Key skills units

Key skills units describe what you need to know and do to achieve your key skills. There is one unit for each key skill at different levels.

A unit is divided into two parts - Part A and Part B. Part A tells you what you need to know so you will be confident about applying your skills and producing evidence. Part B is called 'What you must do' and describes the skills you must show. You must have evidence in your portfolio that you can do all the things on the list.

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## Achievement of key skills

There are two different types of assessment for key skills:

- you need to build a portfolio containing evidence which shows that you can do everything the key skills units ask
- for Application of Number, Communication and Information Technology you may also need to do a short test

Whether you will need to take these tests depends on the qualifications you have already achieved at school or college. Your assessor will discuss this with you.

### The key skills portfolio

Putting together a key skills portfolio involves gathering evidence to show that you have used key skills in a way that meets the standards. Your Quest assessor or trainer will help you by giving you activities or projects that help you build your portfolio until it contains all the evidence for your key skills.

### The key skills tests

The tests are made up of questions about what's in Part A of the key skills units. You do not have to get all the questions right to pass. There are separate tests for Communication, Application of Number and ICT. The three other key skills are not tested in this way.

At Levels 1 and 2 the Communication and ICT tests last for an hour each, the Application of number test lasts for 45 minutes. There are 40 multiple-choice questions and each question is worth one mark.

The best way to prepare for the tests is to look at past papers and practise answering the questions.



### Key skills and apprenticeships

Key skills form part of all apprenticeship programmes. If you are doing key skills as part of a

Learning Agreement Programme (LAP), you will work towards the key skills required for the apprenticeship programme related to your current job. For example, if you are working in a garage you will do Application of Number, Communication and ICT at Level 1 and if you are working in a hairdressing salon you will work towards Application of Number and Communication at Level 1.

### When are the tests taken

You will take the tests when you feel you are ready. You may take the different key skills tests at different times.

### Key skills certificates

When you have achieved the necessary units and successfully completed appropriate external assessments, you will receive your City & Guilds Key Skills certificates.

#### HINTS AND TIPS

- Look for chances to use key skills in your everyday work
- Work out what your strengths and weaknesses are
- Remember - many of the things you do at work involve key skills
- One piece of evidence can count towards more than one key skill
- Take the opportunity to do new things at work. Ask your employer for a chance to try out a new task
- Practise and prepare for the tests
- If you do project work, think about how you're using key skills
- And finally, don't panic! You can always ask for help if you need it.

### Useful website

[www.excellencegateway.org.uk](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk)