

READING

EMPLOYMENT

WORKPLACE
ESSENTIAL
SKILLS

PROGRAM

SYNOPSIS



COMMUNICATION & WRITING

MATH



PBS LiteracyLink®
Workplace Essential Skills

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PBS LiteracyLink® Workplace Essential Skills

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ORIENTATION: **Making it Work**

Learning Focus: This program is about the series *Workplace Essential Skills* and the PBS LiteracyLink® project — what they are, how the pieces (25-part television series, workbooks, and on-line lessons) work together, and how they can be used effectively to help learners find a job, or find a better job, and succeed in the workplace.

Key Concepts

1. Why and how the *Workplace Essential Skills* television series was created.
2. What the PBS LiteracyLink project is.
3. Overview of the video series with excerpts from such programs as “Applying for Jobs,” “Planning to Work,” “Measurements and Formulas,” “Solving Problems,” “A Process for Writing,” “Working Together,” and “Communicating with Customers.”
4. Description of the students workbooks.
5. Overview of the on-line lessons.
6. Where to find help.

Real-life Interviews

- Several adult educators and learners talk about how and why they used *Workplace Essential Skills*—the videos, workbooks, and on-line lessons—and what they like about the project.
- Learners talk about their goals and why they are involved in adult education programs.
- Adult educators talk about how the series can be used effectively, and they provide some insight into adult education centers, who they serve and how.
- The program includes examples from the student workbooks and on-line lessons as well as excerpts from the television programs.

Program Excerpts

Excerpts from *Workplace Essential Skills* are included in the program and indicated by a letterbox format. When the television picture has black lines at the top and bottom of the screen, you’ll know you’re watching either a dramatic vignette or a real-person interview from one of the 24 instructional programs.



PROGRAM 1: Planning to Work

Learning Focus: Finding a career, getting a better job, making a change.

Key Concepts

1. Find out what your good at.
2. Look for help, check the library and employment agencies.
3. Set goals, create a plan, and decide if you need training.
4. Learn about different jobs and see if they meet your needs.
5. Make a change.

Story Synopsis

The program opens with Lamar as he quits his job—he sees no future in fast food and it’s not in his field of interest. We follow him as he begins to look for a job. At a training site, he learns how much it will cost and how long it will take him to become a certified auto mechanic.

We also meet Cheryl, a single mom who doesn’t have a job, and her best friend, Dawnelle, who works behind the cosmetics counter in a discount store. Cheryl decides to make a change in her life and begins to identify her skills and research job possibilities. Dawnelle, inspired by Cheryl’s efforts, begins looking into new job opportunities.

Real-life Interviews

- Job seekers talk honestly about their hopes and fears and about what they’re doing to find jobs.
- Job counselors offer advice about how to identify skills, find training, research job opportunities, and plan careers.



PROGRAM 2: Matching Skills and Jobs

Learning Focus: Matching skills with employers’ needs.

Key Concepts

1. Find out what you’re good at and what employers are looking for.
2. Learn the value of training in reaching your long-term goals.
3. Find out how employers advertise for employees.
4. Make a good impression in person and over the phone.
5. Don’t give up.

Story Synopsis

In this program, Cheryl begins to identify her talents and hears about a job at the hotel where her aunt works. Dawnelle discusses her interests with a cosmetics supplier. Lamar visits his former teacher to talk about his job prospects. His teacher, Mr. Nichols, helps him see he has choices to make and gives him a letter of recommendation.

Real-life Interviews

- Job seekers and employment counselors talk about how to identify your skills and the value of training in reaching your long-term goals.
- Real employers talk about what they’re looking for in employees, how they advertise openings, and the importance of making a good first impression.



PROGRAM 3: Applying for Jobs

Learning Focus: Effective job applications and initial meetings.

Key Concepts

1. How employers screen applicants.
2. What’s on an application form and what it’s used for.
3. Successful applications.
4. An application is your first interview.

Story Synopsis

Cheryl struggles with filling out job applications. Dawnelle helps her figure out newspaper job ads. She drops by the hotel to pick up an application form. Lamar puts in an application an auto shop. Mr. Nichols looks over his application and helps him think through some of the potential trouble spots on it.

Real-life Interviews

- Human resources directors talk about how they screen applicants, what they look for on application forms, what they notice when they meet job applicants, and how they feel when someone they’ve hired succeeds.
- Job trainers and clients talk about successful — and unsuccessful — applications, including how to handle problems in your past.



PROGRAM 4: Resumes, Tests and Choices

Learning Focus: Managing your job search.

Key Concepts

1. Resumes: what they are and how employers use them.
2. How to best describe your skills, experience, and education.
3. Where to find resources and assistance.
4. The cover letter.
5. Be prepared for skills tests, drug tests and background checks.
6. What to consider when weighing job and training choices.

Story Synopsis

At the library, Cheryl helps Dawnelle create her resume using a computerized form. Later Cheryl's typing skills are tested at a job site. Lamar has a choice to make — should he take an entry level job in an auto shop or sign up for more training? Mr. Nichols advises him to weigh the pros and cons.

Real-life Interviews

- A job trainer and her client work on his resume, searching for the best way to describe his skills and choosing the best words to describe his work experience.
- Trainers and clients alike brainstorm word choice and special skills.
- A profile of a job training center, Women Employed, features clients and trainers talking about why you might need help and what kind of help you might get.
- A job seeker discusses and reads from her cover letter.
- Employers talk about tests they use and what the tests show.



PROGRAM 5: Interviewing

Learning Focus: Interviewing — what to expect and how to prepare.

Key Concepts

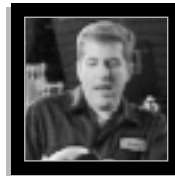
1. Start your interview off right: the opening conversation.
2. Preparing for difficult questions; what employers want to know.
3. What kinds of kinds of questions to ask... and what not to ask.
4. How to leave the interview with a good impression.
5. Make the most of your first interview.

Story Synopsis

Cheryl practices interviewing with Dawnelle in anticipation of her upcoming interview. Dawnelle asks Cheryl some difficult questions so she can be prepared. Later Cheryl dresses carefully for her interview. Lamar is offered several jobs and must make a decision. Dawnelle interviews for a position with LaBelle Cosmetics. The program concludes with Cheryl learning the results of her interview.

Real-life Interviews

- Job seekers practice their interviewing skills during mock interviews.
- A job trainer analyzes how each candidate handles the mock interview.
- Several job seekers also talk about how they present themselves and how they prepare for interviews.
- Employers share their side of the interviewing process.
- They provide an overview of what they're looking for, give examples of questions they ask, and suggest things a job seeker should avoid in order to make a good impression.



PROGRAM 6: Ready for Work

Learning Focus: How to be ready for work.

Key Concepts

1. Plan for work... and make a back-up plan.
2. Expect the unexpected.
3. How and why to make a good impression.
4. Plan to learn.
5. The how and why of fitting in.

Story Synopsis

It's Nick's first day on his new job. His car breaks down, he brings his personal life to work, and he doesn't like orientation; he'd rather be "really working." Meanwhile his wife, Gina, and her co-worker deal with problems when another co-worker, George, doesn't seem to be acting responsibly. Gina must also decide if she's ready to take on new responsibilities as shift supervisor of the hospital housekeeping department.

Real-life Interviews

- Workers and counselors talk about keeping a new job, developing a new “mind set.”
- Job counselors talk about fundamental life skills employers expect — such as being reliable.
- Supervisors and counselors advise new employees about coping with a new job — work habits to establish, to how to dress and act, to how they need to listen, learn, and fit in.
- Workers share survival tips and discuss what they like about their jobs.
- A worker says a job is what you make of it.



PROGRAM 7: Workplace Safety

Learning Focus: Safety issues in the workplace.

Key Concepts

1. Workplace safety is everyone’s job.
2. Two kinds of safety training: prevention and response.
3. Be aware of dangerous situations and know company policies.
4. Pay attention to labels, know where to find safety information.
5. Learn to spot and handle safety hazards.
6. Workplace safety depends upon trust.

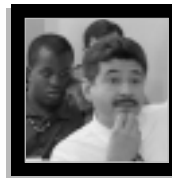
Story Synopsis

In a nursing home, the housekeeping staff brainstorms ideas to ensure patient safety. Despite the notices and morning meeting, George does not heed the “no latex gloves” warning on a patient’s door. The nurse discovers this and throws him out of the room. Gina confronts George about the problem and discovers that he can’t read.

At the Hopco shipping department, an experienced worker is showing Nick how to do his job, then gets called away abruptly. Later, a load of boxes arrives at another company, but they weigh more than the 60-pound weight limit. The receiver sees that the boxes were packed by Nick at Hopco!

Real-life Interviews

- Cable installers describe day-to-day safety issues.
- Workers in construction, manufacturing, hospitality, and health care fields describe hazards associated with their work and discuss safety procedures and safety training.
- Workers talk about some less obvious safety hazards in food preparation, medical emergencies, and ergonomics.
- A manufacturer and a construction worker describe safety inspections.



PROGRAM 8: Learning at Work

Learning Focus: Coping with some of the pressures of a new job.

Key Concepts

1. Coping strategies for the first days on a new job.
2. How to deal with paperwork and prioritize.
3. How to get the most from your training.
4. Learn from feedback; use feedback to improve.
5. Use your job as an opportunity for growth.
6. Keep your goals in mind and plan how to attain them.

Story Synopsis

Nick fills out lots of forms for his new job. He explains to the shipping supervisor why he filled some boxes over the weight limit. When he goes over the shipping process again, Nick takes notes and asks questions. His trainer reminds Nick to ask for help any time he has a problem or is not sure of something.

At a nursing home, Gina tells her supervisor how she handled a problem with an employee, but says she’d like some training in the area. That evening, Nick and Gina talk about their days at work.

Real-life Interviews

- A hotel customer service training session includes role-playing.
- A trainer discusses issues and describes training as an investment in employees.
- Trainers describe how they train and what they look for; trainees describe their experiences.
- A cable company employee describes starting her new job, taking advantage of her training, and dealing with an irate customer.
- A trainer describes good customer service, trainees, and the importance of being willing to learn.
- Trainers and trainees talk about what their jobs mean to them.



PROGRAM 9: The Language of Work

Learning Focus: An overview of communication basics.

Key Concepts

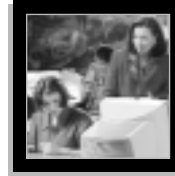
1. Workplace communication—an overview.
2. Successful two-way communication.
3. Communicating with co-workers and supervisors.
4. Communicating with customers—be a good listener.
5. How to develop a professional communication style.
6. Strategies for improving communication skills.

Story Synopsis

Mr. Lawrence orients Veronica on her first day at the Sole Man restaurant. He tells her to ask questions if she doesn't understand something. When she hands in an order for catfish, the cook tells her they're out. She changes the order without asking the customer. When she serves the dish, her customer gets angry and sends it back. Mr. Lawrence explains how Veronica mishandled her customer. She talks with her fellow waitress Bobbi about creating a "professional style," and Bobbi points out ways Veronica can improve.

Real-life Interviews

- A trainer tells how the "language of work" differs from communicating with friends and family.
- Clothing store employees discuss non-verbal communication.
- Employers tell how good employees act if there's a problem.
- Workers describe language associated with their jobs.
- Construction workers discuss communication between supervisors and employees.
- A cable installer talks about dealing with an angry customer.
- Workers consider feedback, writing down difficult things, and asking questions.
- Workers sum up communication skills needed to be successful on the job.



PROGRAM 10: Communicating with Co-workers & Supervisors

Learning Focus: Successful communication and conflict resolution.

Key Concepts

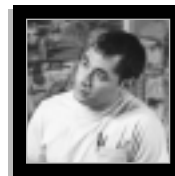
1. Communicating at work— who, what, and why.
2. How negativity can spread.
3. How to communicate with supervisors and learn from feedback.
4. Positive solutions for problem situations.
5. How and when to find help.

Story Synopsis

Julia, owner of an advertising agency, hurriedly gives new instructions to her staff, causing them to shift gears, and then dashes off. Sheila, Pat, and Hector can't open the computer file to begin the job and can't reach Julia for advice. The staff complains about ongoing problems, including Julia's management style. When Sheila tries to deal with the complaints, co-workers accuse her of being on Julia's side. She must also deal with Julia's frustration when the job isn't done.

Real-life Interviews

- Employees at a factory, a clinic, a drugstore, and a hotel discuss dealing with conflict.
- A human resources person describes an interviewing process and a test for communication skills.
- Hotel supervisors and employees discuss problem-solving techniques.
- Supervisor-worker teams at other sites describe the communication chain—how information flows from the supervisors to the workers and back again—and their working relationships.



PROGRAM 11: Working Together

Learning Focus: Teamwork at the workplace.

Key Concepts

1. Definition of a team and teamwork.
2. Team goals/team responsibilities.
3. Action plans.
4. More from the mix: how teams benefit from diversity.
5. Qualities of effective leaders and team members.
6. Benefits of teams.

Story Synopsis

At a new home construction site, the foreman presents a potential problem—the owner wants to move a column, which will require rewiring, delaying the whole project. The carpenter explains how the problem affects everyone, and works with the group to find a solution.

Julia, owner of an ad agency, calls the staff together to improve their working relationship. They bring up problems and talk about solutions. One staff member has an issue that must be worked out privately. The group works out an action plan at their next meeting.

Real-life Interviews

- Continuous themes: Employees at a paper plate factory work as an organized team; at a restaurant, teamwork is less structured.
- Factory employees and supervisors describe how team members work together, the dynamics of working as a team, and the benefits of teams both personally and from the company's point of view.
- Restaurant owners talk about how they work with their staff as a family and what they look for in employees. They tell how diversity can be beneficial by describing two chefs who have different talents and perform different roles.



PROGRAM 12: Communicating with Customers

Learning Focus: Customer service and customer satisfaction.

Key Concepts

1. The importance of serving the customer.
2. Find out what will satisfy the customer.
3. Understand the customer's point of view.
4. Turn a negative into a positive.
5. Find out how a customer feels and keep the customer satisfied.
6. Good customer service in person and on the phone.

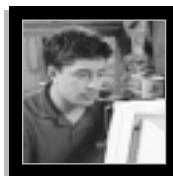
Story Synopsis

At a new home construction site, the crew proposes a solution to a customer-requested change, but the client doesn't think it will work. Client and crew work together to find the best solution.

Veronica, a new waitress, tries to give good service, but annoys two customers. She asks her co-worker Bobbie for advice. Veronica sees the difference between customer service and customer satisfaction and learns when she must check with her supervisor. Later, Veronica makes an irritated customer happy.

Real-life Interviews

- Several different companies expect employees to deliver customer service and customer satisfaction.
- A customer service rep explains a "first call resolution" policy, allowing her to solve customer problems immediately.
- Workers explain how to find out what a customer wants—listen.
- Hotel managers tell how a customer mistakenly thought the staff misplaced her suitcase, then complimented a worker on resolving the problem.
- Workers discuss difficult customers; customer service reps offer advice for good phone service.



PROGRAM 13: A Process for Writing

Learning Focus: The purposes and processes of workplace writing.

Key Concepts

1. Workplace writing is "writing with a purpose."
2. Writing to communicate and to document events.
3. The writing process outlined.
4. Understanding your audience and your purpose for writing.

Story Synopsis

At an ad agency, Mattie discovers that the slogan in an ad Janice is laying out is different from the slogan in the television spots. With a one-day deadline and their supervisors out, they decide to create ads using both slogans. Mattie and Janice write a memo documenting what they do.

Lyndon, owner of a landscaping firm, talks with a customer who doesn't want to pay for a job because of dying plants. Lyndon questions Raul, whose name is on the paperwork. By looking through the job file, Raul sees what was done and by whom. Lyndon asks Raul to write a letter explaining their position. Raul doesn't think the letter will do any good.

Real-life Interviews

- A variety of workers talk about writing effectively, and about forms and records as ways to manage, keep organized, and document work.
- A business owner and a manager talk about written communication.
- Workers describe what tone and style they use depending upon their purpose and audience.
- An employee explains how writing allows her to be matter-of-fact, even when she's not pleased with something.
- A writer tells how powerful the written word can be.



PROGRAM 14: Supplying Information: Directions, Forms and Charts

Learning Focus: Labels, lists, directions, forms and charts.

Key Concepts

1. Strategies for supplying information on charts and forms.
2. Strategies for writing clear directions.
3. Strategies for using labels, lists, and signs to organize.

Story Synopsis

At an ad agency, Janice learns why routine paperwork is important when Regan, in the business office, calls with questions. Warren is the only person who knows how to run the dry-mount press. Janice suggests that he write down the instructions so others can help. When Warren reads his instructions for Janice to follow, he sees the need to make them clear and precise.

At a landscaping firm, Raul needs to know why junipers are dying on a job site. He asks Celina, who has organized the tool shed, to help. Celina learns that Troy knows the answer, and wonders why he never told her. Because they seldom see each other, he suggests they leave each other notes.

Real-life Interviews

- We follow a patient's paperwork throughout a hospital and see the importance of a particular form and the work of clerks in keeping it complete and accurate.
- A cable company employee tells how he learned the importance of keeping up with paperwork.
- Workers talk about using forms to organize their day and keep track of money and activities.
- Other workers talk about organizational strategies.



PROGRAM 15: Writing Memos and Letters

Learning Focus: Writing effective memos, letters, and reports.

Key Concepts

1. The function of business writing.
2. Steps in the writing process:
 - determine your purpose and audience;
 - choose the best format;
 - gather facts;
 - write a draft;
 - revise and proofread the draft;
 - distribute your finished piece.

Story Synopsis

A landscaping firm employee, Raul, argues with an angry client. Lyndon, the owner, asks Raul to write a letter without anger, though Raul questions what good it will do. Raul thinks of a possible solution, and Lyndon tells him to put it in the letter. They read and revise his letter.

At an ad agency, Janice tells Mattie that the boss wants to know what ads they created for the "This dog/That dog" dog food campaign. Mattie suggests they write down what they want to say. They draft a voice mail that best responds to the boss' request.

Real-life Interviews

- A small business owner and a writer talk about the kinds of writing they do, and why they'd rather write than speak.
- They and others discuss the writing process; their purposes, audiences, and formats.
- The writer says it's her job to gather facts, organize them, and make sure they're correct.
- The owner talks about research.
- Both share how they revise and why revision is important.
- The owner talks about the computer's spellchecker, and tells the story of presenting her business plan to possible funders.



PROGRAM 16: Reading for a Purpose

Learning Focus: How people use what they read to do their jobs.

Key Concepts

1. What and how you read, depending on your purpose.
2. Workplace reading materials that can help you.
3. Strategies for reading short documents.
4. Strategies for reading long documents.
5. How to find information and to compare what you've found.
6. What to do if you don't understand what you're reading.

Story Synopsis

At a garage, Louise, a mechanic, wonders how her co-worker, Marcos, has had time to read their new policy manual, which is long and difficult. When she reads, she begins at the beginning. Marcos shows Louise other ways to read that save time but still get her the information she needs.

At a music store, Johnnie has to read a "how to" book, even though he doesn't like to read, in order to string a guitar as his boss has asked.

Real-life Interviews

- Several workers tell how they know what's important and must be read.
- A custodial supervisor talks about reading schedules, safety materials, policies and procedures.
- A teacher describes the difference between reading for fun and reading at work.
- Manufacturing plant workers show how documentation helps them trace a problem and solve it.
- A sales supervisor tells how workers compare sales information.
- A biologist and a salesman show how they search for information.
- The custodial supervisor and a hairdresser describe their required reading.



PROGRAM 17: Finding What You Need: Forms and Charts

Learning Focus: Forms and charts as tools to organize information.

Key Concepts

1. How and why forms are used in the workplace.
2. Strategies for dealing with forms.
3. How and why charts are used in the workplace.
4. How to read a chart.
5. How to deal with difficult or confusing charts and forms.

Story Synopsis

At a music store, Johnnie walks a customer through a special guitar order. The customer thinks Johnnie must know a lot about guitars, but Johnnie says he's just following the form on his computer.

At a garage, Louise and Marcos must figure out how to read a chart on a computer—an engine analyzer—in order to figure out what's wrong with a new car.

Real-life Interviews

- Two workers describe how their promotions have required them to read more.
- A teacher talks about using forms and charts at work.
- Workers describe various forms they use everyday.
- A salesman points out that similar forms ask for similar information.
- A busy cashier team leader tells how forms guide her work.
- Musicians talk about how a form they use keeps them organized.

- A horse farm worker keeps foaling information in her head but keeps a record for others.
- A salesman shows how he reads and follows a complicated chart.
- A custodial supervisor reveals that he couldn't read when he started, but learned when he was offered a promotion.



PROGRAM 18: Following Directions

Learning Focus: Directions, instructions, and diagrams in the workplace.

Key Concepts

1. Types of instructions in the workplace.
2. Strategies for dealing with directions.
3. The use of diagrams, maps, or flow charts in the workplace.
4. Features of diagrams, maps, and drawings.
5. Benefits of figuring out how to do things on your own.

Story Synopsis

Harriet and Jane want to open a daycare facility and must research what it will take to do so. They are overwhelmed with the amount of paperwork and tasks they face, but by breaking the process down into manageable steps they begin to take control of the work involved.

On a road construction site, a worker has unexpectedly discovered a marshy area. He and his supervisor check the plans for a mark indicating a sinkhole. The supervisor points out that if they overlooked it on the plans, they'll have to pay, but if it isn't on the plans, the state will have to pay.

Real-life Interviews

- Department store team members show how directions are provided via electronic scanners, electronic mail, and plans and drawings.
- A hair salon owner talks about the importance of reading directions.
- Technicians show how they solve equipment problems by following directions in manuals and SOPs.
- People who work with children needing prosthetic limbs describe how they determine the limb specifications. The technician describes how he follows these instructions and diagrams in crafting the limb.



PROGRAM 19: Reading Reports and Manuals

Learning Focus: Keeping up with information and using reference materials.

Key Concepts

1. Memos and short messages, and prioritizing your reading.
2. Using the title, table of contents, index, and other guides to find what you need.
3. Effective research strategies: how to find and compare information from several sources.

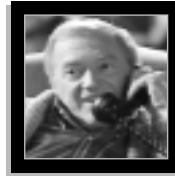
Story Synopsis

On a road construction site, the inspector has found a spring that wasn't on the plans. Now they have to handle the spring as cheaply and quickly as possible. Malcolm makes a suggestion and later reads about the results of his suggestion in a memo to his supervisor.

Harriet and Jane have manuals that they must read through if they are to open a daycare center in a church basement. They must search through several sources and compare information to make a difficult decision. On top of that, they're worried the bank won't give them the loan they need.

Real-life Interviews

- Throughout the program, workers describe the kinds of things they read.
- A salesman and a hair salon owner show how they use guides or skim through material to find what they need.
- A groom shows how she researches pedigrees.
- Biologists talk about using the Internet and journals to find information they need.
- A department store team leader says employees get a sense of pride when they're given sales information to read.
- A hair salon owner tells how she became a business woman and how she is working to achieve her dream of establishing homes for women with substance abuse problems.



PROGRAM 20: Number Sense

Learning Focus: Number sense, problem solving, decision making, and communication.

Key Concepts

1. Number sense is our ability to understand numbers.
2. How to use grouping, sorting, and ordering to organize work.
3. Using number sense to set up and solve problems.
4. When, why, and how you estimate.
5. Using computers and pencil and paper to calculate.

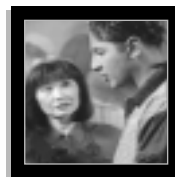
Story Synopsis

At a telephone company, Jimmy, a customer service rep, tries to help an irate customer. Jimmy works through a series of problems with his bill.

At a health clinic, Dawnelle, now a receptionist, helps Mrs. Ramirez keep her appointments by estimating the amount of time each patient ahead of her will take. But she has trouble filing patient charts that are organized by a chart number. Victor shows Dawnelle how to sort and organize files in order to save time.

Real-life Interviews

- Throughout the program, workers talk about numbers in their lives.
- A baker says he has learned that numbers are a language.
- A biologist describes using data she's collected to determine how much disturbance birds can handle and then to create solutions that will preserve bird habitats.
- The baker and a construction foreman describe how they estimate and why it's important to be accurate.
- A customer service rep shows how a calculator is a valuable tool; a cashier says it's important to be able to work problems by hand as well.
- A member of a road crew says working with numbers gets easier with experience.



PROGRAM 21: Solving Problems

Learning Focus: Using math skills to solve problems.

Key Concepts

1. Decisions are a part of every job; a problem solving process can help.
2. Steps in the problem-solving process.
3. Estimation gets easier with experience.
4. Many workplaces provide formulas to solve common problems.
5. Working on a problem means sticking with it.

Story Synopsis

In a hotel kitchen, Cheryl discovers she can't afford all the strawberries her chef needs. Her supervisor tells her it's time to raise prices and shows her how. Cheryl calculates a price and realizes she's figured the cost for 100 servings, not one.

Martina, a bookstore manager, learns she needs bookmarks for a book signing in two hours. A clerk, Gabe, estimates how fast he can get to a mall and back. At the fabric store, he discovers he doesn't have enough money so the clerk suggests alternatives — fewer ribbons or cheaper ribbon. He and Martina work through several possible solutions before solving their problem.

Real-life Interviews

- Throughout the program, workers describe how they solve problems.
- A baker says he uses an “if/then” approach to problem solving, and describes a checklist he uses to find why something went wrong.
- Examples and methods are provided by the owner of a car repair shop, a worker at a paper plate plant, a pair of shippers, an animal care supervisor, a musician, and recording engineer.
- A worker says he used a diagram to figure out why paper plates were doubling up on him.
- Workers share how and why they estimate, and the foreman of a road crew describes the consequences of not estimating well.



PROGRAM 22: Fractions, Decimals, and Percents

Learning Focus: Using decimals, fractions and percents on the job.

Key Concepts

1. Build on what you know and review the rules.
2. Understand what numbers mean and how to calculate.
3. Fractions and decimals are both parts of a whole.
4. Rates describe relationships — inches per foot, price per pound, etc.
5. Look for examples or use your imagination to visualize your problem.

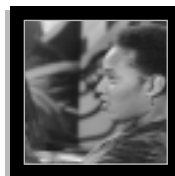
Story Synopsis

Gabe, the sales clerk, is not sure how to figure a percentage or a fraction off the price of a book. Martina tries to help him understand different ways of dealing with percentages, decimals, and fractions. He knows he needs to learn how to do the math or he could lose his job.

At a health clinic, Dawnelle is scolded for giving a patient a late appointment. She doesn't like the way they schedule patients. The nurse asks her to suggest a better way. Victor tells Dawnelle to try to see the problem. Using tongue depressors to represent patients, she figures out a new way to schedule appointments.

Real-life Interviews

- Two musicians describe the numbers in music and demonstrate how musical phrases are divided and how rhythm can be expressed as a fraction.
- One of the musicians tells of a percentage problem that cost him money.
- A baker says he has to understand the proportion of ingredients in order to bake, describes the “baker's percentage,” and reveals how he figures fractions.
- Other workers show how and why they work with fractions, decimals, percentages, and rates.



PROGRAM 23: Measurements and Formulas

Learning Focus: How people solve problems involving sizes and amounts.

Key Concepts

1. Picture the sizes you're working with by thinking of examples you can relate to and calculate following the same rules you learned in school.
2. Choose a tool that's made for your measuring task.
3. Consider the shape of what you're measuring.
4. Use a familiar measurement to help judge the reasonableness of your numbers.
5. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
6. Learn to use the right tool for the job.

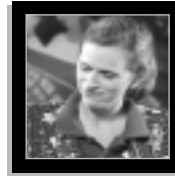
Story Synopsis

It's “Wellness Day” at the health clinic, and Dawnelle is weighing a client who is distressed at the results. Later she can't understand why a baby's head circumference is 44 inches. The nurse asks her if she notices anything about the tape measure, and points out that she's measuring in centimeters, not inches. Although Dawnelle is embarrassed by her mistake, the nurse says it's a good thing she noticed something didn't seem right and checked on it.

At the hotel, Cheryl has learned that one of their suppliers is having a close-out on facial tissue and she must decide whether or not to buy 1,000 cases. Her supervisor Melinda asks if they have enough storage room for 1,000 cases. To figure out if this is a good buy, Cheryl must get more information, do several calculations using formulas, and then decide if the numbers she gets make sense.

Real-life Interviews

- A carpenter shows how he finds an example of something he needs to build, takes measurements, designs his own version, creates a blueprint, and then makes the piece, in this case a kickplate for a horse stall.
- Throughout the program, workers talk about the kinds of measurements they take as well as the tools and methods they use.
- A tool maker shows how he makes a piece part from a print that specifies exact measurements and materials.
- Later he talks about the art and precision that go into making a piece part.
- Workers talk about the formulas they use on the job—for figuring concrete, for figuring the tonnage of blacktop, to make sour dough starter.
- A road construction foreman tells stories about the importance of accuracy in both calculating and estimating.



PROGRAM 24: Trends and Predictions: Graphs and Data

Learning Focus: How data is collected, displayed, and used to make decisions.

Key Concepts

1. Why and how you might collect data on the job.
2. How data is used—to make comparisons, track growth, and analyze problems.
3. How data is displayed—uses of bar graphs, pie charts, and line graphs.
4. The importance of understanding what a graph really shows.
5. How to use graphs to draw conclusions.

Story Synopsis

A telephone supervisor uses graphs to help a customer service rep, Jimmie, track how he's doing. Another rep shows him how to track trends and match services with customer needs. Jimmie tries out what he's learned when a customer calls about discontinuing voicemail.

At the neighborhood clinic, Dawnelle is worried about the Garcia baby because her weight and height are nowhere near the averages she's seen in a baby magazine. The nurse says she doesn't have all the information.

Real-life Interviews

- Sales team leaders in several stores talk about keeping shelves stocked; tracking sales; comparing what they're doing to other departments, other stores, and their past sales; and using the data to make projections.
- An outdoor equipment store uses the Internet to find graphs of conditions at vacation spots so they can advise customers.
- By tracking items customers buy, a grocery store can make sure it stocks favorites.
- A research biologist tracks the fish population in the state's lakes.
- A manufacturing plant worker shows how graphs help workers spot patterns and make improvements.

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