Reading skills practice: Skills for the 21st-century workplace – exercises

Have you got the skills you need for the 21st-century workplace? Read about what employers are looking for and test yourself to see if you are prepared!

Preparation
Fill the gaps with the correct phrase from the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>analyse information</th>
<th>communicate well</th>
<th>problem solving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good at making decisions</td>
<td>the 21st century</td>
<td>age of technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are living in 1 ___________________________. Some people call it the 2 ___________________________.

We need to learn skills such as 3 ___________________________ and we need to be able to 4 ___________________________ with other people around the world. Employers are looking for people who can 5 ___________________________ well, people who are able to recognise whether information is reliable or not. They also like people who are 6 ___________________________ without asking for help.
Have you got the skills you need for the 21st-century workplace?

We need to develop all kinds of skills to survive in the 21st century. Some, like ICT skills and knowledge of the digital world, are taught explicitly in schools in the UK. Here are five less obvious ones for you to think about. These are the sorts of skills that employers may ask you questions about in interviews, so it’s a good idea to think about how good you are in these areas. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

**Imagination**

In the age of technology that we are living in now, it is no longer enough to keep on making the same products. Employers need people who can imagine new approaches and new ideas.

**Think:** Think of an object or gadget you use every day. How could it be improved? Can you think of three improvements?

**Problem solving**

Employers will value workers who are able to see problems before they happen and come up with creative solutions.

**Think:** Imagine you are organising an end-of-term social event at school. Think of some problems that you could face. Can you think of any solutions?

**Communication skills**

Workers will have to be good communicators. They will have to be able to negotiate and discuss key issues and also write in a clear way without using too many words.

**Think:** How do people communicate with each other in the 21st century?

**Critical analysis**

Employers want workers who are able to recognise the difference between information that can be believed and false information.

**Think:** Use the internet to find out three facts about a celebrity or famous figure. Can you verify the information by checking other websites?

**Decision making**

Individual workers have a growing amount of responsibility. It is important to be able to evaluate a situation and be confident in making a decision.

**Think:** Which three things could you do to (a) be healthier (b) do better at school and (c) help others? Make a decision now to do at least one of these things. Then ... just do it!
1. Check your understanding: true or false
Circle True or False for these sentences.

1. 21st-century skills are not taught in schools in the UK.  
   True  False
2. Employers like workers to be imaginative.  
   True  False
3. Employers want workers to think about possible problems.  
   True  False
4. Employers like workers to be original when solving problems.  
   True  False
5. Future workers will need to be able to write concisely.  
   True  False
6. People communicate with each other less in the 21st century.  
   True  False
7. Employers believe it is useful to know a lot of information about celebrities.  
   True  False
8. Employers don’t want workers to make decisions without asking them.  
   True  False

2. Check your vocabulary: gap fill
Complete the sentences with a word from the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>have</th>
<th>make</th>
<th>value</th>
<th>differentiate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>develop</td>
<td>discuss</td>
<td>teach</td>
<td>solve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. UK schools and colleges __________ ICT skills.
2. Employers __________ people with ideas for new approaches.
3. Employers like workers who can __________ problems.
4. Workers need to be able to __________ their work with their team.
5. Workers need to __________ their writing skills.
6. It is important that workers can __________ between truth and lies.
7. Employees in the 21st century __________ more responsibility.
8. Employers like their workers to __________ decisions.

Discussion
Which of the skills mentioned in the article do you think is the most important? Why?

www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishsteens
© British Council, 2016 The United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We are registered in England as a charity.