

# ACCESS: Academic Literacy Foundation Skills

## Overview

Some years ago the President’s Secretary of Labor asked people in all different fields of work to identify the skills they needed to be successful at work. One set of answers, called “Foundation Skills” offers a useful model of what students also need to know to be successful at school. I used the Secretary’s three main categories---Basic Skills, Thinking Skills, and Personal Qualities---to organize those academic “foundation skills” listed below. Before assessing yourself using the rubric below, take a minute to consider the Secretary’s original Foundational Skills:

**BASIC SKILLS:** Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks

1. *Reading.* locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and in documents such as manuals, graphs, and schedules.
2. *Writing.* Communicates thoughts, ideas, information and messages in writing, and creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts.
3. *Arithmetic.* Performs basic computations; uses basic numerical concepts such as whole numbers, etc.
4. *Mathematics.* Approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques.
5. *Listening.* Receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues.
6. *Speaking.* Organizes ideas and communicates orally.

**THINKING SKILLS:** Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, and knows how to learn and reason

1. *Creative Thinking.* Generates new ideas.
2. *Decision-Making.* Specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternative.
3. *Problem Solving.* Recognizes problems and devises and implements plan of action.
4. *Seeing Things in the Mind's Eye.* Organizes and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information.
5. *Knowing How to Learn.* Uses efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills.
6. *Reasoning.* Discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and applies it when solving a problem.

**PERSONAL QUALITIES:** Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity and honesty

1. *Responsibility.* Exerts a high level of effort and preservers towards goal attainment.
2. *Self-Esteem.* Believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self.
3. *Sociability.* Demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in group settings.
4. *Self-Management.* Assesses self accurately, sets personal goals, monitors progress, and exhibits self-control.
5. *Integrity/Honesty.* Chooses ethical courses of action.

<b>1 = Never</b>	<b>2 = Usually</b>	<b>3 = Always</b>
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<b>Basic Skills: Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks</b>	
1.	I read actively, using a variety of strategies and asking questions to help me understand what I read.
2.	I identify the main idea and supporting details in informational texts.
3.	I use computers to write, research, and/or present.
4.	I follow oral directions, using strategies to remember and/or comprehend them.
<b>Thinking Skills: Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, and knows how to learn and reason</b>	
5.	I use strategies to help me do well on quizzes and tests.
6.	I use different strategies and techniques to help me remember information.
7.	I use a reading process to help me understand what I read.
8.	I use a variety of notemaking strategies to help me read, write, learn, and think.
9.	I consider what I learn from different perspectives to help me better understand it.
10.	I connect what I study now with what I know from experience and have learned in school.
11.	I know how I learn best and take advantage of this knowledge.
12.	I monitor my reading so I know how well I understand the text and which strategies to use.
13.	I pre-read all texts before I read the entire text and do the assignment.
14.	I use strategies to determine the quality and importance of information.
15.	I set a purpose before I read, write, speak, listen, design, or think.

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	16. I formulate an argument/thesis and support it with details, examples, and quotations.
	17. I read the directions so I know what to do, how to do it, and the order in which things should be done.
	18. I use a variety of strategies to help me visualize what I read/learn.
	19. I use strategies to help me generate ideas when writing, reading, designing, planning, or thinking.
	20. I prepare myself to read, write, listen, watch, or learn.
	21. I find out the criteria by which my work will be graded before I begin.
	22. I learn from my errors, mistakes, and experiences.
	23. I consult other students for suggestions about how to succeed in a class or on an assignment.
	24. I tell my teachers what helps me learn and succeed.
	25. I prioritize my work according to time, difficulty, urgency and resources needed.
	26. I dedicate a specific time for schoolwork each day.
	27. I study in a place that has no distractions and those materials I need.
<b>Personal Qualities: Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity and honesty</b>	
	28. I write down all homework assignments in a planner or on a dedicated page in a binder.
	29. I keep track of my standing in each class.
	30. I bring my book and other materials to class every day.
	31. I have my Internet, library, and school ID cards with me at all times.
	32. I arrive in class, take my seat, and get out my materials before the bell rings.
	33. I have the following school supplies: pens, pencils, paper, binders, calculator, Post-Its, dictionary.
	34. I ask others---friends, parents, teachers---to read, respond to, or check my work.
	35. I ask the teacher for help when I do not understand an assignment.
	36. I show my teacher and fellow classmates respect in the way I speak and act.
	37. I greet my teachers when I enter the class, and look them in the eye when I speak to them.
	38. I have and seek adult allies and mentors who provide guidance and support when I need it.
	39. I use different strategies to help me overcome difficulties I encounter in school and outside school.
	40. I set and revise personal and academic goals for myself throughout the school year.
	41. I contribute to class by asking questions, helping others, and participating in class discussions.
	42. I set aside time for family and friends.
	43. I complete and submit all assigned work on time.
	44. I turn in original work (i.e., I do not plagiarize or cheat).
	45. I am able to work on assignments and projects independently.
	46. I make regular efforts to improve my academic and personal vocabulary.
	47. I read---books, magazines, or newspapers---on my own outside of school.
	48. I read the teacher's comments to improve my performance and understand my grade.
	49. I study for quizzes and tests.
	50. I take notes when teachers lecture, even if they don't require it.
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	

Prompts	
<p>Use any of the following prompts to help you reflect on and synthesize what you learn from the self-evaluation above. Attach a separate piece of paper if necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I notice...</i></li> <li>• <i>I wonder...</i></li> <li>• <i>Obviously I need to improve in the area of...</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>In order to change I must...</i></li> <li>• <i>One strategy that has helped me (e.g., stay organized) in the past is...</i></li> <li>• <i>I need to learn these different skills if...</i></li> <li>• <i>I have difficulties in the area of _____ because...</i></li> <li>• <i>I'd like to improve in the area of _____ so I can...</i></li> </ul>