

TRY THIS:

Creativity skills

Most people equate creativity with a particular kind of person. You may have associated creativity with being an artist, designer, performer or inventor. Most of us underestimate our capacity for creativity. We may compare ourselves with great artists, for example, ignoring all the occasions when we have used our minds and resources creatively to deal with a situation we are in. We all have our own spheres where our natural creativity shines.

- What kinds of creativity do you show in your life?
- Do you have 'your own ways of doing things' for certain tasks?
- In which areas of your life would you like to be more creative?
 - Do you feel comfortable with the idea of yourself as a potentially creative person?

Collaboration:

What are the dynamics in getting people to work together to achieve an outcome in a workplace situation? It can mean everything from knowing how to get the best out of others and motivating them to a common goal, to being able support colleagues through difficult situations or conflicts of personality. Everyone works in different ways, so being able to have different personalities working together and delivering on a single plan or goal relies on effective collaboration as well as having a tactful approach.

- Share the vision – does everyone know what the goal is and how success will be assessed
- Share the stage – make sure everyone has a chance to share their ideas and feedback
- Share the workload – if roles need to be assigned how will this be done and why? Do you prefer to lead or follow?
 - Share the glory – when a successful outcome has been achieved do you recognise all those who contributed and those who collaborated

Know yourself - defining success



There are many ways of looking at 'success'. Some people define success in terms of objective materials criteria. (How much money, how high a position in a company, how big a house). 'Success' is a very subjective matter. It depends on what is meaningful to you and the people around you.

- Jot down quickly the first ten things (or symbols) you associate with success
 - How important is each of those symbols to you personally?
 - Are these things you want very much from life?
 - How do you think your list would differ from somebody else's?
- Compare your list with a friend.

Creative thinking

Creative thinking skills use very different approaches to critical thinking skills. They involve a much more relaxed, open and playful approach. This can require some risk-taking... Creative thinking skills are as much about attitude and self-confidence as about talent. As you are not looking for 'one' answer, you are likely to come up with lots of suggestions that are not 'right'. This can be difficult if you are more used to analytical and logical approaches.

- Brainstorm ideas on one topic onto a large piece of paper: don't edit these, just write them down.
 - Allow yourself to play with an idea whilst you go for a walk.
 - Draw or paint a theory on paper, or doodle around key words
 - Ask the same question at least twenty times and give a different answer each time.
 - Ask questions such as 'What if....?' Or 'Supposing....?'

Work readiness

What is work readiness? Employers say they want students to be work-ready. Having had work, whether paid or voluntary, part-time or full-time, helps to develop an understanding of what this entails. 'Work readiness' is hard to define precisely, but ... employers want to take on new staff who identify with the needs of their business

- Bring a 'can-do' attitude – undertaking reasonable tasks when asked
- Take pride in your work – going the extra mile and being professional



- Use time effectively – including being punctual
- Be generally helpful and flexible

Critical thinking

Traditionally, educational learning has emphasized content over process. We are in transition toward an emphasis of process over content.

Knowing facts is no longer as important as being able to analyse, synthesize, prioritize, categorize and evaluate information. Life skills in the information age include the ability to process many types of information in many ways. To prepare for success, we need to learn to deal with a rich array of information types and consider how to process the information verbally, visually, logically, intuitively.

- Understand the criteria (i.e. what decision/action needs to be taken) • List all the options (not just the ones that appeal to you) • Order the options according to the criteria • Evaluate the possible outcomes • Use this to plan your course of action(s)

Time management

Do you feel you have loads of time, or are you often ‘running out of time’?

Time management is an essential skill, especially as technology seems to provide people with 24-hour access. There are many tools (on your phone, computer/ tablet) that can help you plan your time, as well as diaries, schedules and wall planners. What matters is making a start to plan your time and reviewing and refining how you use that time.

How do you manage your time? What % do you give to the following 4 stages?:

- Plan what are you going to do – and by when?
- Does the activity need to be broken into stages?
- Do – tackle the task in the time you have allocated
- Review – if you were to offer advice on the same task to a friend, what advice would you give? How would you help them complete the task? Does the plan, time allocation or outcome need to be amended?
- Reflect – what did you achieve, what was left undone?

21st-century study skills



Are your study skills up-to-date? With modern technology there is a lot more support available at the touch of a button. Often it's not the amount of time you spend studying, but how effectively you use that time. Study skills aren't just for exams; study skills can help in preparing for meetings, and when creating or reviewing work. Have you made the most of your mobile phone, tablet or computer to develop these skills?

- Begin by looking at the task and divide it into phases – research, 1st draft, review, 2nd draft, final – and put these into your outlook calendar/schedule: it will remind you what to do and you can update as you progress.
- Set a realistic time frame for each phase and use your mobile's alarm to keep a track of time
- Work with other students using email/social media or other links
- Bookmark useful pages as you find them
- Make use of the recording feature. Read your work aloud and listen back to it. If you're bored or can't follow the argument, what will the final reader of the piece feel? Use the playback feature to find what points to stress, what to delete and what to review

Teamwork

Teamwork skills are life skills. More people lose their first job for lack of ability to get along with others than for lack of technical skills. Social skills are core to all the life skills frameworks. The most fundamental social skill is empathy. Understanding communication, friendship, caring, diversity skills, leadership skills, and teamwork skills all hinges on the ability to feel what it is like to be the other person.

How can you develop empathy?

- Demonstrate clearly that you are listening
 - Listen for the underlying message: what does the person really mean?

What do they really want you to hear or to know?

- Leave silences – this enables other people to enter the dialogue or to work out their own position
- Use appropriate body language and facial expressions

Leadership Skills



Being a leader demands a lot from anyone, often including prioritisation, people management, delegation, negotiation, development and intervention. Personally, there will be the need to manage the stress of the job and the expectations of those in the team. No matter if you're a leader already or just part of a team, think about how you want to be respected.

How often should you meet with 'the team'? Should a leader be visible by their absence?

- Communicate with the team (and not just the negatives). What communication style do you prefer and how is this viewed by your team?
- Do you leap in and 'do' and when do you delegate? Who to?
- Do you give feedback – how often do you ask for feedback from others?

Self-awareness

"Either we learn to manage our emotions or we are managed by our emotions..." Daniel Goleman eloquently makes the case for the importance of affective skills (growth in feelings or emotional areas). Affective skills include knowing and dealing with one's feelings. We may not be able to choose whether we are angry or not, but we can choose what we do about our anger. Without affective skills we "act out" our feelings rather than "act from" our feelings.

- What does assertiveness mean to you?
- How often are you assertive? How does it make you feel?
 - How do you feel when you think you have not been respected or listened to?
- How does this affect your emotions?
- How does that impact on your colleagues?

Listening skills

Good listening skills are invaluable to forming rapport with others... However, skilful listening is about more than 'hearing words'. It involves understanding the message, the situation and other people. There is an art in being able to discover what another person is trying to communicate, and this can take many years to perfect. Think of a recent





situation when you felt that you were trying to communicate your point of view and could not make yourself heard.

- What was the situation: what happened?
- How did you feel?
- What did you do?
- What could the 'listener' or 'listeners' have done differently to help you feel you had been listened to?

