



# softskills

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## courseware

WIN Learning's Soft Skills Courseware is undergoing an extensive content refresh in 2020. Employers are more focused than ever on hiring and training employees with strong professional skills such as communication, problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration. WIN Learning has provided a comprehensive, research-based Soft Skills solution for ten years and, as the research and the demand has evolved, so has our content.

In the summer of 2019, WIN Learning identified seven goals used to review and update the Soft Skills Courseware and Essential Soft Skills assessment.

1. Evaluate current research and identify a set of learning objectives aligned to the latest research.
2. Align the current Soft Skills Courseware and Essential Soft Skills assessment to the newly identified set of objectives and to each other.
3. Complete a gap analysis that informs the development of new content and the potential restructuring of existing content.
4. Create and/or source content to address the identified gaps and strengthen and deepen coverage.
5. Increase interactivity and engagement throughout with more videos, interactive components, and animation.
6. Refresh and realign offline materials.
7. Refresh and align the ESSA item pool.

Ten main documents were used as primary sources for our research. (See Appendix A for full list). Each soft skill that was identified as a relevant, valuable, or required employee skill was added to a list. If the skill appeared in at least 5 of the 10 sources, it was tagged as highly relevant. Through this process, WIN Learning identified 20 high priority soft skills valued by most employers. Eleven of the 20 objectives were identified as high priority in at least eight of the sources.

Through the alignment process, WIN discovered that most (13) of the identified highly relevant objectives are already addressed in Soft Skills Courseware, therefore the existing content our customers have long relied on remains highly aligned to research. WIN also identified seven new objectives that employers indicate as essential in the workplace that are either minimally addressed or not yet addressed in the current courseware. Comprehensive coverage of the newly identified objectives is being added.

## 2020 Soft Skills Courseware Objectives

<b>Communicating Effectively</b>
Understand the elements of effective listening, speaking, and writing
Consider the purpose, audience and medium of communication, including email etiquette, texting, and social media
Understand the role of the customer and develop positive customer relationships
*Adopt a growth mindset and become an active learner
Demonstrate strategies for conflict resolution
<b>Conveying Professionalism</b>
Build trust through punctuality, dependability, and accountability
Demonstrate integrity, initiative, and a strong work ethic
Represent the organization in the workplace and beyond with pride and professionalism
*Develop organizational skills and effective work habits
Manage time effectively and prioritize tasks
*Use common technology and choose tools to fit tasks
*Develop basic business acumen
<b>Promoting Teamwork &amp; Collaboration</b>
Recognize the characteristics of an effective team member
Develop leadership skills
Recognize, celebrate, and incorporate individual diversity and differences in the workplace
<b>Thinking Critically &amp; Solving Problems</b>
*Adapt to new information and circumstances
Make decisions with logic and reason
*Demonstrate awareness of systems and design for improvement
Use a cycle of inquiry to investigate a problem
*Evaluate and interpret data sources and visual displays

\*New objective

*Note: A detailed description of each module and lesson, including specific skills included in each lesson, are found in the Essential Soft Skills Courseware Scope and Sequence on page 4.*

WIN is writing new content to address the new objectives and deepen the instruction in existing objectives. Objectives includes 3-5 discrete skills and each skill incorporates direct instruction, practical strategies, workplace examples, opportunities for practice and application, and assessments to check for understanding.

As part of the new instructional content to address the current high priority skills, several new videos and interactive components will be added. The videos fall into two

categories: managerial and scenario. The managerial videos are one-minute presentations by managers from varying industries explaining the relevance of a particular skill in the workplace using real workplace examples. The scenario videos are pairs of videos that demonstrate the right and wrong way to handle a workplace challenge. The interactive components require the user to make choices, explore different paths, answer questions, and complete decision trees to keep them engaged while checking for understanding of key concepts.

In addition to the creation of new content, much of the existing Soft Skills courseware is being reorganized to better align to the highly-relevant objectives and to more consistently follow the format of: direct instruction, strategies, practice and application, and check for understanding. Images and videos are being updated to reflect a more diverse population. Scenarios and examples reflect a broader range of industries. A more modern user interface is also being applied.

WIN Learning feels strongly that a blended solution is the most comprehensive approach to a deeper understanding of Soft Skills. WIN offers offline classroom exercises that allow learners to apply and practice the essential soft skills. Having opportunities to practice and receive real-time feedback from an instructor is an important part of the learning process and mastery of the skills. The offline classroom materials are also being updated to include refreshed content and new material aligned to the new objectives. New items are being developed and field tested for the Essential Soft Skills assessment to ensure alignment with the new objectives.

Essential Soft Skills Courseware - Scope and Sequence			
Communicating Effectively		In this module students will learn how to be more intentional with communication at work as well as strategies for dealing with specific circumstances like conflict resolution and handling critical feedback.	
Lesson	Objective	Description	Skills
Lesson 1	Understand the elements of effective listening, speaking, and writing	This section explores the factors that make communication challenging and general actions students can take to become more effective listeners, speakers, and writers in the workplace.	barriers to communication, active listening, nonverbal communication, clear and concise speaking and writing
Lesson 2	Consider the purpose, audience and medium of communication, including email etiquette, texting, and social media	In this section students learn how to be more intentional with communication by learning specific strategies for effectively communicating messages so that they are frequently understood and well-received.	purpose, audience's role and preferences, benefits of specific mediums (e.g. in person, telephone), guidelines for usage (e.g. email, text message)
Lesson 3	Understand the role of the customer and develop positive customer relationships	In this section students will expand their understanding of the role of the customer in business and develop strategies for creating productive relationships.	external customers, internal customers, listening for needs, asking for feedback, accepting criticism
Lesson 4	Adopt a growth mindset and become an active learner	This section explores how a person's beliefs about their abilities impact how well they communicate and interact with others at work. The process for actively learning new skills is also discussed.	fixed mindset, growth mindset, asking for clarification, accepting constructive criticism, setting learning goals, creating action plans, monitoring progress
Lesson 5	Demonstrate strategies for conflict resolution	In this section students learn about why teamwork is important and how to communicate effectively when conflict arises. A framework for productive resolutions is included.	collaboration, innovation, unproductive responses, the CALM model for conflict resolution, confidentiality, "I" statements
Conveying Professionalism		In this module students will learn general expectations for behavior in the workplace as well as several skills that lead to personal success such as organization. In addition, the fundamentals of business including cost, revenue, and the role of the customer are reviewed.	
Lesson	Objective	Description	Skills
Lesson 1	Build trust through punctuality, dependability, and accountability	In this section students will learn the importance of being a dependable and accountable employee and colleague.	punctuality, attendance, responsibility to others
Lesson 2	Demonstrate integrity, initiative, and a strong work ethic	In this section students will learn the importance of demonstrating integrity, initiative, and a strong work ethic.	dedicated, thorough, motivated, limiting personal tasks, positive attitude, helping others, honesty, being ethical
Lesson 3	Represent the organization in the workplace and beyond with pride and professionalism	In this section students explore the relationship between an employee and an employer. Students will learn how to put their best foot forward and represent an organization well.	hygiene, clothing, body language, tone, behavior, sobriety, social media
Lesson 4	Develop organizational skills and effective work habits	Students will learn the value of personal organization as well as specific strategies to help them to stay organized in the workplace.	organization, documentation, scheduling, reminders, meeting preparation, task lists
Lesson 5	Manage time effectively and prioritize tasks	Students will learn specific strategies for managing time and prioritizing tasks at work.	goals, action plan, procrastination, conflicting priorities, excess time
Lesson 6	Use common technology and choose tools to fit tasks	Students will learn about technology that is commonly used in the workplace. They will practice matching tools to tasks in order to be more strategic at work.	computers, smartphones, printer, copier, communication tools, documentation tools; troubleshooting
Lesson 7	Develop basic business acumen	Students will learn the fundamental rules of business including vision, finances, and decision making.	product, service, mission, vision, capital, human resources, cost, revenue, profit

Promoting Teamwork and Collaboration		In this module students will learn how to become an effective member of a team and how to develop the skills that are necessary to lead effective teams.	
Lesson	Objective	Description	Skills
Lesson 1	Recognize the characteristics of an effective team member	In this section students will learn the benefits of teamwork, the characteristics of a good teammate, and the common challenges that teams face in the workplace.	dependable, accountable, positive attitude, providing constructive feedback, inclusiveness, respect, shared vision, collaboration
Lesson 2	Develop leadership skills	Students will explore a variety of leadership skills and consider ways in which they can develop their own leadership skills.	vision, facilitation, planning, communication, influential, fairness, team building, initiative
Lesson 3	Recognize, celebrate, and incorporate individual diversity and differences in the workplace	In this section students will learn the value of having different opinions, perspectives, and experiences on a team. Specific strategies for dealing with individual differences are discussed.	problem solving, cultural awareness, differences, disabilities, discrimination
Thinking Critically and Solving Problems		In this module students will learn how to apply critical thinking processes to situations in the workplace. They will also learn specific strategies for interpreting, evaluating, and communicating data to others.	
Lesson	Objective	Description	Skills
Lesson 1	Adapt to new information and circumstances	In this section students will learn why it's important to be flexible and adapt to new information and challenges that commonly arise in the workplace.	timely and relevant, adding value, taking ownership, managing stress and motivation
Lesson 2	Make decisions with logic and reason	Students learn that decision making is a process that involves structure, collaboration, and patience. Criteria for collecting and evaluating information are discussed.	goals, constraints, alternatives, risks; evidence, fallacies; inductive and deductive reasoning
Lesson 3	Demonstrate awareness of systems and design for improvement	Students will challenge themselves to think about how parts of an organization or system work together to create a whole. The causes and effects of different actions will be discussed.	cause and effect, interrelations, diagnosing problems, correcting malfunctions, modifying systems, proposing new systems
Lesson 4	Use a cycle of inquiry to investigate a problem	Students will practice investigating a problem using a cycle of inquiry. They will focus on short-cycle experiments that test one variable and use the results to develop a solution or a more informed hypothesis.	inquiry cycle, problem, hypothesis, test, collect, reflect, revise
Lesson 5	Evaluate and interpret data sources and visual displays	In this section students will learn common types of data, best practices for using data, and basic visuals for displaying data.	context, evaluating sources, guiding questions, scatter plot, bar graph, pie chart

## Appendix A

### Original Sources

- *Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce* (2006).
- Nagle, Richard (2010). *Hiring, Retention & Training: Employers' Perspectives on Trade and Soft Skills in South Carolina*.
- Society for Human Resource Management (2008). *Critical Skills Needs and Resources for the Changing Workforce*
- *The Demand for Soft Skills: Key Skills for Indiana's Growing Occupations through 2014* (2007).

### Primary Sources for Refresh

- United States Department of Labor (1991). *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000*
- United States Department of Labor (2014). *Building Blocks for Competency Models*
- South Carolina Department of Education (2018). *Competencies for the Profile of a South Carolina Graduate*
- Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce (2018). *Common Skills in High Demand*
- CareerSource Florida (2018). *Skills Gap and Job Vacancy Survey*
- Commonwealth of Kentucky (2016). *KY Skills & Employability Standards*
- National Network of Business and Industry Associations (2014). *Common Employability Skills, A Foundation for Success in the Workplace: The Skills All Employees Need, No Matter Where They Work*
- The National Association of Colleges and Employers (2019). *Career Readiness for the New College Graduate: A Definition and Competencies*
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (2016). *Bridging the Soft Skills Gap*
- Perkins Collaborative Research Network (2015). *Employability Skills Framework*

*Summaries of the above sources are available upon request.*