

Lesson 3: Interests, Abilities, and Skills



How do you think someone like Jarome Iginla became such a successful hockey player? What abilities and skills did he develop throughout his childhood and adolescence that made him successful? Do you think his abilities were “natural,” or do you think he gained most of his skills through hard work and practice? No doubt it was a bit of both. A key factor here is that he was interested in hockey. His interest in the game kept him attending practices and developing his skills. Or was it that he had a natural ability, so he enjoyed the game, and that made him interested in it? Interest, abilities, and skills are interrelated, each affecting the others.

Interests

What are your interests now? Are they the same as they were a few years ago? Have you developed new interests or pursued old interests in more depth? Do you have some interests that you have not yet had the chance to pursue?

Interests are all those activities, events, pastimes, and ideas that attract you. An interest captivates your attention and makes you want to spend time exploring it. You feel curiosity and a desire to learn more about it. Your interests may be very unique and personal, or they may be ones that you share with others in clubs or blogs or discussion groups.

1. Gather some information about yourself by doing each of the following activities.
 - a. Make a quick list of ten things that interest you. Don't ponder this task. Just list, as quickly as you can, things that interest you.
 - b. How do you spend your spare time? Do some of these activities reflect your special interests?

c. Which of the following areas relate to your interests? Write your choices in your notebook or electronic file. Select as many areas as you like.

- art
- drama
- music
- literature
- science
- languages
- astronomy
- nature
- animals
- people
- ideas
- puzzles
- physical activities
- sports
- finance
- business
- clubs
- food
- travel
- teaching
- learning
- collecting
- dancing
- machinery
- tools
- new technology
- computers

d. How do your interests relate to the following parts of your life?

- how you spend your leisure time
- your favourite activities with your friends
- what you enjoy most at school or in your neighbourhood
- an enjoyable activity you do with a member of your family

e. Use your imagination to explore your interests. Select any three of the following situations. Identify what you would choose to do if you had

- an hour of free time
- a day to spend as you please
- a week to do as you choose
- one hundred dollars to spend on something that interests you
- all the money in the world
- one book to read
- to give a speech on one topic to a room full of interested people

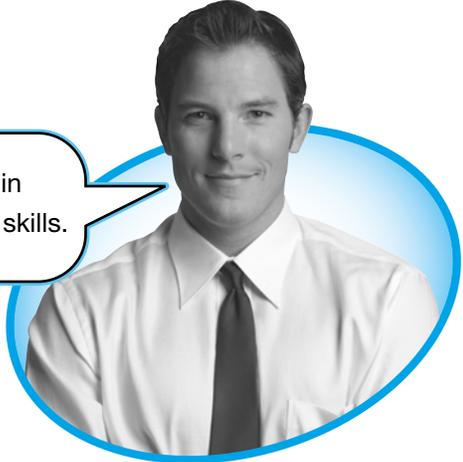
Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.



Interests can play a role in your career choices. For instance, if you love animals you might decide that you want to work with them. Would you study to become a veterinarian or an animal health technician? Would you become a farmer specializing in a certain type of animal? Would you open a salon for dogs? Would you choose to work in a pet store? Talk to parents or other adults you know. Ask how their interests have affected their career and occupational choices. Do you know anyone whose interest has become his or her occupation?

Abilities and Skills

The words *skill*, *ability*, *talent*, and *aptitude* are often used interchangeably. They all refer to things you are able to do and/or things you are good at. Often the word *aptitude* is used to describe a natural talent you have—a thing you learn easily. Your aptitudes may be seen in the things you do well. For example, maybe you've always been good at learning languages. It means you have an aptitude for it. Aptitudes may also refer to your potential skills—natural skills you may have not yet discovered.



Aptitudes are usually included in efforts to identify the following skills.

transferable:
able to be used
in a different
situation

- **Personal skills and abilities.** Some abilities are personal in nature; they are sometimes considered to be the skills that make you the person you are. They are the skills you use in day-to-day activities, situations, and interactions with other people. Self-confidence, honesty, energy, co-operation, and a sense of responsibility are all personal skills. In essence, these skills are **transferable** because they are a part of you that you take into all situations and experiences.
- **Transferable skills and abilities.** Transferable abilities are those skills that are learned and used in certain situations, but they can be successfully transferred from one situation to another. Often, transferable skills are those identified as more work-related. In combination with personal skills, they equip you to function in various work-related situations.

Some abilities, such as communicating with others, require a combination of personal and transferable skills. These are sometimes called “self-management” skills, and refer to abilities for managing and organizing yourself, which can help you go about living your life. You require these general abilities and skills to cope with everyday situations and make decisions.

- **Specific knowledge-based skills and abilities.** Some skills are very specific. They meet the needs of one task or activity. For example, a framing carpenter will have learned specific construction skills to frame a house. Knowledge-based skills are usually learned through specific education, training, or through specific work experience.

¹ Judith Campbell *Lifechoices: Careers Teacher Resource* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Ginn Canada, 1999), 39–40. Reprinted with permission by Pearson Canada.

Gather information about your skills and abilities by responding to the following questions.

*social skills:
the abilities
you use in your
interactions
with other
people*

2.
 - a. What **social skills** do you have? (Social skills are the skills you use in your interactions with other people. Think about how you relate to the people around you.)
 - b. What social skills have you developed since your childhood?



3.
 - a. What have you accomplished in your life so far? What makes you feel proud? Make a list of five things you do or have done well in your life. This is your own private list. It should include things of which you are proud, not necessarily things that other people view as great accomplishments or even know about.
 - b. Are some of your skills and strengths directly related to your interests? Take a look at your personal interests. What skills or strengths are needed to pursue each of these? What skills have you learned from your interests, both past and present?
 - c. Are you an expert at something? What abilities do you have that are respected by others?

Compare your answers with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.



Sometimes a list of skills can help you recognize your skills. Use the following ideas to stimulate your thinking about the skills you have.

- being with other people
- being on your own
- physical activities
- your own health care
- learning
- thinking
- making decisions
- using words
- working with numbers
- machinery
- being artistic
- nature
- business
- financial planning
- researching
- computers
- influencing/coaching
- setting priorities
- being responsible and reliable
- being determined
- being accountable
- teamwork
- organizing yourself
- sports
- school
- working with your hands
- solving problems
- working at a job
- music
- using equipment
- creating/building/making
- being a leader
- animals
- analysing information
- listening
- setting and reaching goals
- selling
- acting
- respecting other people
- energy and determination
- any other area you can think of

4. Choose five skills or interests you have that you would like to use in a work setting. Explain.

Compare your answer with the Suggested Responses at the end of the lesson.

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Competencies

In the employment world, the term *competencies* is used to describe combinations of your skills, abilities, aptitudes, and talents. Competencies come in many forms and are demonstrated in everything you do. They can stem from your strengths as a learner or from the kinds of intelligences you possess. Some of them enable you to function in the world in a practical way. Others allow you to explore new experiences or assist you in learning new skills and attitudes. Are you fearless when it comes to physical activity? Perhaps you are detail-oriented. Or maybe you are good with small children. These are just a few examples of competencies you might possess.



Go to page 1 of Assignment Booklet 3A and respond to questions 1 and 2 of Section 1.

Looking Back; Looking Ahead

You have now looked at your interests, skills, and abilities. Recognizing what you are interested in and what you are good at will help you choose a career path that will bring you enjoyment and success. In the next lesson, you will explore how your attitudes about learning play a role in which careers are most suitable for you.

Glossary

social skills: the abilities you use in your interactions with other people

transferable: able to be used in a different situation

Suggested Responses

- 1. a. to e.** All your answers will be personal and will depend upon your interests. These questions are meant to help you to understand who you are as a person. Interests are very personal and indicate things you enjoy in life. The aim is to determine an occupation or career that fits with your interests so that you will enjoy your working life.
- 2. a.** Possible social skills include *good listener, caring, trustworthy, sociable, approachable, interesting, conversationalist, and empathetic*. You may have listed others.

b. Answers to this are wide open. You might have listed things like learning to play volleyball, learning a traditional dance, getting along with classmates, learning table manners, respecting other people's property, using language appropriate to the situation, and so on.
- 3. a.** Are you having difficulty thinking of five things? Remember your childhood and the many skills you mastered.

b. Often, if a person is interested in something, he or she will enjoy it, spend time doing it, and gain skills related to it.

c. Being an expert at something means having the skill to do it well. Over time, being an expert also makes something that is very difficult look easy. You may be an expert at something, but have never demonstrated it to others, so the last question may not apply. But most often experts are recognized by others.
- 4.** You have chosen five skills or interests that you would like to see yourself using in a career. What careers might they match up with? Are these careers that you might consider? You will do more exploration of the skills and interests that fit best in certain careers later in this module.

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