

Employability Skills

Framework

for ELT

Introductory Guide



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What do we mean by 'employability skills'?

Employability is about more than having appropriate qualifications, technical skills or a specific body of knowledge. To be able to participate effectively in the workplace and fulfil their potential throughout their careers, employees (and potential employees) also need to develop transferable core skills and appropriate attitudes.

Many of these core skills (often referred to as 'soft skills') are social skills – the need to work well with other people, with different backgrounds and potentially conflicting interests. There is also an increasing need for higher level thinking skills – to be more critical of information and opinions, to be able to make connections across complex ideas and data sets, and to think creatively to solve problems. In addition, there is the demand for more personal, emotional skills – the ability to maintain motivation despite setbacks, to have a positive attitude when faced with challenges, and to deal constructively with change and uncertainty.

Why teach employability skills?

Businesses around the world are finding that their future success depends on having a workforce that has these kinds of social, cognitive and emotional skills. The National Soft Skills Association (nationalsoftskills.org) found that 85% of job success comes from having well-developed soft skills. Despite the apparent need for employees to possess effective core skills, some evidence reveals large mismatches between the actual supply and demand of key work-related skills. According to a report by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the most common skills deemed to be lacking among staff in UK companies are people and personal skills relating to workload management and teamwork (Vivian et al., 2015). Around the world there is increasing demand from businesses for employees with effective core skills, and education has a critical role to play in helping learners to develop these skills.

Why integrate employability skills into English language teaching?

Learning an additional language already involves many of these core skills, such as communication, collaboration and critical thinking. This makes the development of these skills especially suited to language learning, and there is lots of scope to develop these skills in an integrated way through the teaching of English.

An overview of the Employability Skills Framework for ELT

Employability Skills

Framework

for ELT

The Employability Skills Framework for ELT is a way of making sense of the different skills that employees and potential employees need to develop, in addition to learning English. The framework is based on extensive research into employer needs and is aligned with the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework ([cambridge.org/clcf](https://www.cambridge.org/clcf)).

By providing a map of the most important employability skills, the framework allows teachers to gain a deeper understanding of what each of the skills involves and integrate them more systematically into their teaching.



How does the Employability Skills Framework for ELT help?

The Employability Skills Framework for ELT groups employability skills into eight key areas of competency that learners need to develop if they are to be successful both in current employment and throughout their future careers. These are:

COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK	COMMUNICATION	INNOVATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING	CRITICAL THINKING AND DECISION MAKING
Developing skills for successful group work, completing collaborative tasks and projects, and dealing with conflict.	Understanding others better, presenting one's views clearly and effectively, and adapting communication for different audiences and purposes.	Developing a creative mindset, generating ideas, and solving problems effectively.	Understanding, analysing and evaluating information and arguments in order to make decisions.
LEADERSHIP AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT	EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	DIGITAL LITERACY
Contributing to the success of an organisation, demonstrating leadership, and contributing to an organisation's positive role in global issues.	Developing organisational skills to manage time, tasks and information, and learning to manage one's ongoing professional development.	Developing self-awareness, learning to act with resilience, and demonstrating empathy and positive relationship skills.	Learning to use tools and creating digital content, sharing and interacting appropriately with others online, and ensuring safety and wellbeing online.

So, how can you gain a deeper understanding of what each competency really means? The framework breaks down each competency into more detail, so that you can see much more clearly which skills your learners need to develop to be good at that particular competency.

Each Competency is divided into Core Areas - these are the broad skills and behaviours that make up each competency. The Core Areas are then divided into Component skills - these give more clarity to exactly what is meant by each core area.

Shown below are the **Competencies**, **Core Areas** and **Components** that make up the Employability Skills Framework for ELT.

COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK	Working well together in a group	Establishing ways of working together Responding constructively to others Supporting others in their tasks
	Completing collaborative tasks and projects	Agreeing what needs to be done Managing the distribution of tasks Making use of the skills and knowledge of colleagues Ensuring progress towards a goal
	Dealing with conflict	Identifying challenges, problems and opportunities Managing team conflict and resolving issues
COMMUNICATION	Understanding others better	Listening actively to others speaking Managing communication barriers or breakdowns
	Presenting views clearly and effectively	Structuring information in spoken and written texts clearly Speaking with confidence and fluency Writing clearly and convincingly
	Adapting the way you communicate for different audiences and purposes	Identifying the need for different communication styles in different contexts Adjusting language for different contexts, purposes and people Showing awareness of differences in communication styles across cultures
INNOVATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING	Developing a creative mindset	Engaging actively with ideas and challenges outside one's immediate responsibilities Considering perspectives of different stakeholders Finding solutions by looking at approaches taken in other teams or organisations
	Generating ideas	Generating multiple ideas Elaborating on and combining ideas Developing alternative scenarios and proposals
	Implementing ideas and solving problems	Developing and testing out new ideas Implementing, presenting and explaining ideas and solutions
CRITICAL THINKING AND DECISION MAKING	Understanding and analysing information and arguments	Analysing information, identifying patterns and relationships Interpreting and drawing inferences from different sources of data
	Evaluating ideas and arguments	Evaluating arguments and proposals Reaching conclusions from comparing different arguments
	Making decisions	Identifying and understanding problems Identifying, gathering and organising relevant information Evaluating options and recommendations to come to a decision Justifying decisions and solutions Evaluating the effectiveness of implemented solutions

LEADERSHIP AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP	Contributing to the success of an organisation	Fulfilling own responsibilities within the team
		Understanding the role and responsibilities of the team within an organisation
		Demonstrating understanding of an organisation's values and culture
	Demonstrating leadership	Taking the initiative to address issues or pursue opportunities
		Managing groups of people effectively
		Taking a strategic approach to one's area of work
		Generating support for action through effective communication strategies
	Contributing to an organisation's positive role in global issues	Supporting organisational initiatives to address global issues
		Encouraging new initiatives on global issues within an organisation
		Developing intercultural awareness of the different beliefs, values and behaviours of other people
Demonstrating awareness of ethical issues relating to an organisation's impact on others		
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT	Being organised	Using systems to manage time and tasks
		Using systems to manage information and documentation
	Managing your professional development	Setting goals for professional development
		Taking action to develop new skills and knowledge
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	Demonstrating self-awareness	Monitoring and reflecting on own emotions
		Implementing strategies to manage one's own emotions in the workplace
	Acting with resilience	Managing stressful situations
		Developing a positive attitude and work ethic
	Demonstrating empathy and positive relationship skills	Establishing and maintaining positive relationships
		Showing empathy for the feelings of others
DIGITAL LITERACY	Using tools and creating digital content	Sourcing and managing digital data, information and content
		Making critical judgements about work-related digital data, information and content
		Selecting and using appropriate digital tools for specific work-related tasks
		Creating digital content (text and audio-visual) to solve a problem or complete a task
	Sharing and interacting online	Using appropriate technology to connect and interact efficiently with colleagues, customers and suppliers
		Collaborating with others digitally to complete a task
		Interacting appropriately in a digital workspace by demonstrating intercultural awareness and maintaining confidentiality
	Safety and wellbeing online	Staying safe online, following organisational guidelines
		Maintaining personal and professional wellbeing
		Safeguarding an organisation's digital systems and devices

Collaboration and Teamwork

Research among employers reveals that the ability to successfully collaborate and work well in a team is one of the most sought-after employee attributes. Around the world, there is increasing demand from businesses for employees with effective core skills such as collaboration and teamwork. We have identified three Core Areas within Collaboration and Teamwork:

COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK		
Working well together in a group	Completing collaborative tasks and projects	Dealing with conflict

Collaboration and Teamwork in the classroom

Integrating collaboration and teamwork into our lessons creates a more inclusive classroom and supports successful language acquisition by increasing learner engagement. But as well as being key to inclusivity and engagement, developing these skills also enables our learners to be able to participate effectively in the workplace, and fulfil their potential throughout their careers.

- Encourage learners to celebrate the success of group tasks by reflecting on their own contributions and roles, as well as setting goals for improvement.
- Integrate choice into tasks so that learners can choose to work to their strengths, or to try things they are not confident at to develop new skills. Additionally, encourage learners that do have strengths in one particular area to support others in their tasks.
- Support learners in identifying and implementing conflict resolution strategies and resolving issues that arise during group tasks.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Create opportunities for learners to work together in groups, and ensure that tasks have clear goals and steps.
- Explain and discuss the need for collaboration and teamwork within each task with your learners.



Communication

In the workplace, people need to be able to express themselves clearly and appropriately when speaking and writing, to listen actively to others, and to be able to use nonverbal communication appropriately. The National Soft Skills Association found that 85% of job success comes from having well-developed soft skills such as communication, and communication has been identified as one of the top skills that employers look for in their employees. We have identified three **Core Areas** within Communication:

COMMUNICATION		
Understanding others better	Presenting views clearly and effectively	Adapting the way you communicate for different audiences and purposes

Communication in the classroom

As well as being key to successful language development, communication is an essential employability skill for employees and potential employees to develop. Although we naturally teach communication skills as English teachers, there is always more that we could do to make the most of these opportunities in order to help our students become excellent communicators.

interview to ask about the impression given by an interviewee who is looking downwards and avoiding eye contact with an interviewer (being prepared to highlight cultural differences).

- When practising new language phrases, encourage learners to consider how language might differ according to different contexts, and create opportunities for learners to carry out research about how communication styles differ between cultures.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Before starting communication tasks, explore and discuss the concept of active listening with learners. Encourage learners to work together to define criteria for what makes a good listener.
- Useful communication strategies can be highlighted with effective questioning. For example, a teacher helping adults on an English-for-work course may pause a recording of an

Innovation and Problem Solving

Innovation and Problem Solving skills demonstrate an employee's ability to be a valuable resource to the company by generating ideas and solving problems creatively. A large-scale study into the future of jobs and jobs training (Rainie & Anderson, 2017) identified problem solving as one of the most important skills needed to succeed in the workplace of the future. We have identified three **Core Areas** within Innovation and Problem Solving:

INNOVATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING		
Developing a creative mindset	Generating Ideas	Implementing ideas and solving problems

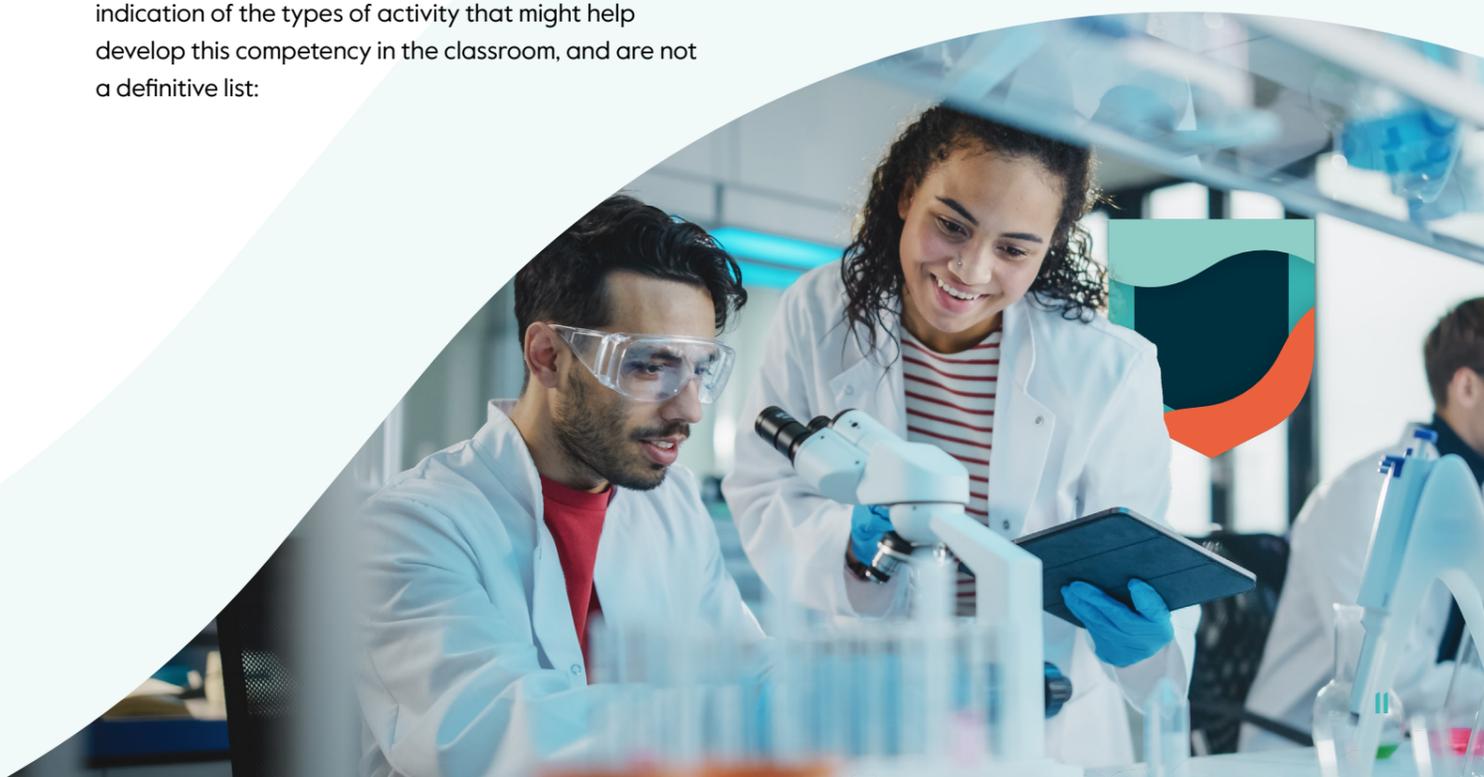
Innovation and Problem Solving in the classroom

As well as helping learners to develop the skills they need to be able to participate effectively in the workplace, integrating Innovation and Problem Solving skills into our lessons also generates a strong and immediate need for language, and the process is more real-world than many other classroom tasks as learners focus simultaneously on both process and product.

- Have learners ask and answer questions. By using questions as a vehicle to dive deeper into your learners' thoughts and ideas, you are promoting innovation and helping learners to develop a creative mindset.
- Encourage learners to generate multiple ideas by integrating brainstorming activities into lessons. In scenarios which involve problems, for example, have learners consider the scale of the problem by brainstorming all the possible consequences, and as many strengths and weaknesses to a proposed solution as possible.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:



Critical Thinking and Decision Making

Critical Thinking and Decision Making are skills that are in high demand from employers around the world, and employees with these skills are seen as immensely valuable. Companies need their employees to have strong analytical and evaluative skills, and to exercise careful judgement and decision making in the workplace. We have identified three **Core Areas** within Critical Thinking and Decision Making:

CRITICAL THINKING AND DECISION MAKING		
Understanding and analysing information and arguments	Evaluating ideas and arguments	Making decisions

Critical Thinking and Decision Making in the classroom

By integrating Critical Thinking and Decision Making into our lessons, we not only help prepare learners for the world of work, but also support them in becoming more successful language learners, as the development of these types of skills leads to improved attention and observation, and more effective analytical skills that can be applied to learners' language studies.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- At the heart of critical thinking is the notion of asking questions. Learners should be encouraged to continually question the information they receive and the conclusions they come to. The teacher should push learners to deeper critical thinking by asking them questions, such as:
 - a. Why is that your answer?
 - b. How did you come to that answer?
 - c. Do you think there could be another answer?
- Encourage learners to seek out and compare alternative arguments and proposals before making decisions and drawing conclusions.



Leadership and Global Citizenship

One of the top skills employers seek in job applicants is leadership, and in today's rapidly changing world, a key aspect of leadership is the concept of global citizenship. Now more than ever, organisations and businesses are looking beyond their local communities and developing an awareness of the world and a sense of their role and responsibilities within the wider global community. We have identified three **Core Areas** within Leadership and Global Citizenship:

LEADERSHIP AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP		
Contributing to the success of an organisation	Demonstrating leadership	Contributing to an organisation's positive role in global issues

Leadership and Global Citizenship in the classroom

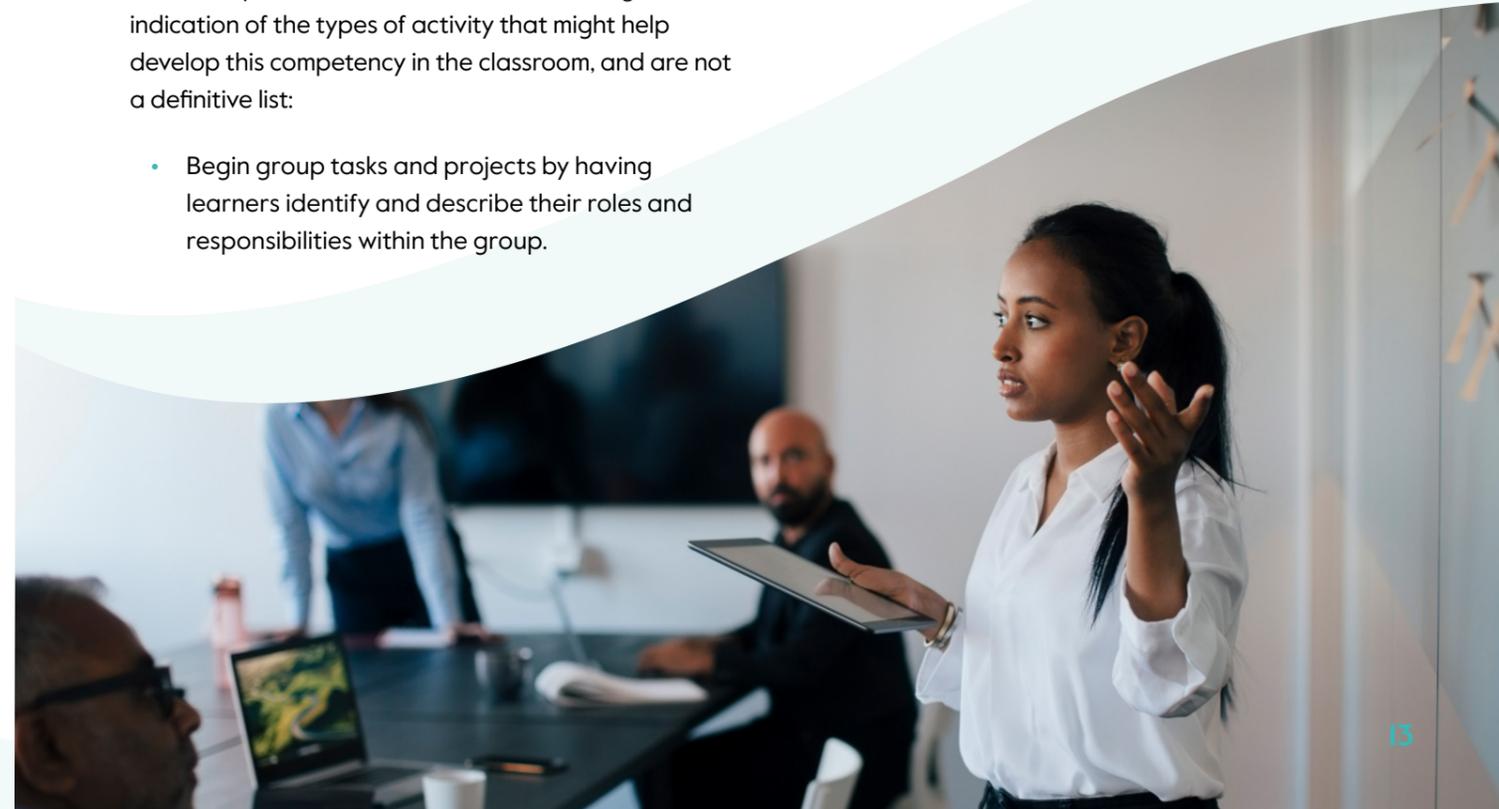
Leadership skills are considered crucial for employees to be able to successfully interact with colleagues, clients and others. For learners to be able to participate effectively in the workplace and fulfil their potential throughout their future careers, developing appropriate leadership practices and global citizenship skills is essential.

- Have learners brainstorm the skills and qualities that make an effective leader, and create opportunities for each learner to take on the role of leader in group tasks.
- Allocate time for learners to research how different companies and organisations address global issues such as the environment, inclusivity, equality, and exploitation.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Begin group tasks and projects by having learners identify and describe their roles and responsibilities within the group.



Professional Development and Management

Strong strategic planning skills and organisational ability are highly sought after by employers, as these skills enable employees to meet deadlines and to maintain realistic goals. We have identified two **Core Areas** within Professional Development and Management:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT	
Being organised	Managing your professional development

Professional Development and Management in the classroom

The rate of change of what we need to know and be able to do is accelerating. To keep up with the demands of an ever-advancing world, it is essential that our learners continue to grow and learn new skills. Professional Development and Management should be viewed as ongoing processes, as the ability to adapt to changes in the business world by developing new skills and knowledge is key to learners' success in the workplace and throughout their future careers.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Encourage learners to create and develop a portfolio documenting their development of new skills and knowledge related to their field of work. Have learners include

examples of how they are developing employability skills in classroom-based tasks, and to include written or recorded reflections on how they feel their skills are developing.

- Support the development of learners' time and task management skills by setting clear time limits for tasks and having learners plan the stages of tasks carefully. Once learners are familiar with working to set times, have them set their own time limits for tasks and reflect on how realistic these were.
- Integrate self-reflection and peer-feedback into lessons by having learners identify what they did well in tasks, and how they can improve their future performance.

Emotional Intelligence

Studies suggest that Emotional Intelligence is one of the most highly valued core skills in the world of work. We have identified three **Core Areas** within Emotional Intelligence:

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE		
Demonstrating self-awareness	Acting with resilience	Demonstrating empathy and positive relationship skills

Emotional Intelligence in the classroom

In a rapidly changing world, employees are increasingly required to deal constructively with changes and uncertainty, demonstrate a positive disposition to challenges, and maintain motivation despite setbacks. Resilience, patience, adaptability and self-awareness are key qualities that learners need to develop in order to survive and thrive in their current and future careers.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Encourage learners to demonstrate self-awareness by reflecting on their emotional responses to different work-related issues and tasks.
- When encountering different work-related issues in course materials, ask learners to consider how the issue might impact on people's emotional states and stress levels. Have

learners work together to identify practical behaviours and actions that might help people control negative emotions, manage stress, and develop a positive attitude.

- Support the development of learners' empathy and positive relationship skills by encouraging them to consider how different characters might feel in reading, listening, and viewing texts. Have learners consider where different characters might need support and identify practical ways of supporting them.

Digital Literacy

With constant changes and advances in digital technologies, employees in all fields of work are increasingly exposed to digital technologies in their working environments. We have identified three **Core Areas** within Digital Literacy:

DIGITAL LITERACY		
Using tools and creating digital content	Sharing and interacting online	Safety and wellbeing online

Digital Literacy in the classroom

Technology has long played an integral role in our lives and it is essential that learners become digitally literate in order to take full advantage of new and flexible ways of working, and make the most of the opportunities that digital technology provides both now and in the future.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might help develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list:

- Develop your own digital literacy skills as a teacher and provide learners with authentic contexts for practice by making use of digital tools in your classroom.

- Create opportunities in classroom tasks for learners to select and use appropriate digital tools for learning, collaborating, and creating content.
- Encourage learners to follow safe online practices by holding a discussion about how learners manage their online identity and the potential positive and negative repercussions of this.
- When practising new skills and language, ask learners to consider how language and communication styles might differ in online contexts, and encourage them to discuss how different behaviours may or may not be appropriate online.

Further reading

For more information on this topic, please see:

Doyle, A. (2018) Top skills and attributes employers seek. The balance careers. 12 July, 2018. Available at: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-skills-employers-want-206248/>

National Soft Skills Association. <https://www.nationalsoftskills.org/>

Rainie, L. and Anderson, J. (2017) The future of jobs and jobs training. Pew Research Center. Internet and technology. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/05/03/the-future-of-jobs-and-jobs-training/>

Vivian, D. et al. (2016) Employer Skills survey 2015: UK results. Evidence Report 97. May 2016, amended May 2018. UK Commission for Employment and Skills. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/704104/Employer_Skills_Survey_2015_UK_Results-Amended-2018.pdf

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Explore more useful frameworks from Cambridge:

Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

cambridge.org/clcf

Find out more at
cambridge.org/english

We believe that English can unlock a lifetime of experiences and, together with teachers and our partners, we help people to learn and confidently prove their skills to the world.

Where your world grows