



Foundational Skills - Introduction

Many people who are drawn to horticulture both enjoy and are very good at working with their hands. However, pretty much every job requires a certain level of ability in reading, writing and using documents. We refer to these abilities as foundational skills because they are the foundation upon which other skills are built.

You will be attending college-level education and you will need strong reading, writing and document use skills. If you're not sure if your skills are at the level they need to be, please check out some of the resources in this module.

We've included exercises and activities that build your reading, writing and document use skills by using real-life landscape and horticultural activities. You can learn or refresh your knowledge about horticulture at the same time you are learning or refreshing your foundational skills!

If you have trouble doing activities in this module, there is more help available. There are free adult upgrading programs in your community. If you do complete the activities in this module but still feel you need to do some more preparation, contact a free local adult upgrading program in your community.

Check Your Skills

First, let's check how you feel about your foundational skills. We'll then come back and see how you feel at the end of the module. Read each of the statements below and select the response that best describes you today.

Statement	I can do this	I would like to do this better	I can't do this
I can read instructions and warnings on labels, e.g., read storage instructions on labels affixed to fungicides and pesticides.			
I can read reference and equipment manuals, e.g., I can read reference manuals to learn about essential plant nutrients.			

Statement	I can do this	I would like to do this better	I can't do this
I can locate data such as blooming schedules, identification numbers, ingredients and quantities in moderately complex lists and tables.			



Reading, Writing and Document Use

This Toolkit module is a place to practice and build your reading, writing and document use skills. It's easier to learn and to keep (retain) skills when you learn them in a context that is meaningful to you. That's why we've used activities that have been built around things you will actually need to know and do as a horticulture technician. You will be building your reading, writing and document use skills while you learn and reflect on what you already know about landscaping and grounds maintenance.

This module has lots of activities in it. We've divided them into four sections:

- **Planting**
- **Grounds Maintenance**

Each of the two sections above has passages of text on the topic at hand followed by activities that reinforce the information that has been shared. Some of this information may be a review of what you've already learned on the job or even in class, but it's a good refresher and a great opportunity to practice your skills.

Finding Information

In order to read and make sense of information, you first have to find it! But what happens if you don't have the information you need? How do you go about finding information?

You need to:

- Talk to the *right* person, not just the person standing next to you. If you don't know who the right person is, ask your supervisor.
- Read something.
- Look it up in a manual or catalogue.
- Look it up on a computer/cell phone/tablet.
- Use the telephone.



The ability to find information is important in our lives at work and at home. However, sometimes finding information is difficult.

Some hints to help find information:

To help find information in written material, try:

- **Skimming** – to quickly identify the main idea of the text. Skimming is done at a speed three to four times faster than normal reading. You can skim when you have lots of material to read in a limited amount of time.
- **Scanning** – to search for **specific** key words in the text. In most cases, you know what you are looking for, so you concentrate on finding that particular piece of information. Scanning involves words or phrases.
- **Using information design features** such as Tables of Contents, Indexes, Titles, Sub-titles, headers, paragraphing. Underlining and bold print can lead you to the right place to look.



The material and learning activities in the above sections (pp. 3-39) was created by Community Literacy of Ontario and the Tri-County Literacy Council (based on Curriculum originally produced by Literacy Link Eastern Ontario) for the use of Landscape Ontario. We are grateful for their permission to use this material.

Recheck Your Skills

Now that you've completed the module, let's see how you feel about your foundational skills. Read each of the statements below and select the response that best describes you.

Statement	I can do this	I would like to do this better	I can't do this
I can read instructions and warnings on labels, e.g., read storage instructions on labels affixed to fungicides and pesticides.			
I can read reference and equipment manuals, e.g., I can read reference manuals to learn about essential plant nutrients.			
I can locate data such as blooming schedules, identification numbers, ingredients and quantities in moderately complex lists and tables.			



Additional Resources

Below you will find a list of other resources you can look at to help you with your foundational skills.

Adult Upskilling Programs

There are lots of reasons why people reach adulthood without having strong reading, writing and math skills. Some people have learning disabilities or difficulties that were never diagnosed when they were in school. Some people moved around a lot when they were children, and the constant movement affected their learning. Still others had other things competing for their attention while they were in school.

The good news is that if you need further help with upgrading your skills, there are free programs that can support you. This [flyer](#) has information about how to find a program near you.

E-Channel (Online) Programs

If you don't have time to attend an adult upskilling program or if you live too far away to attend a program in person, there are also online programs you can take. They are called e-Channel courses and you can find more information about them here: <https://e-channel.ca/about-us>

E-Channel is funded by Ontario's Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. This program provides online literacy courses to adults in Ontario. Courses may be offered in two ways:

- Live courses in an online classroom at a scheduled time
- Anytime courses done independently

The [LearningHUB](#) is one of the online programs you can use to build your skills. They have several courses that can help you build your foundational skills for apprenticeship.

The course called [On the Job Report Writing](#) will help you learn how to write reports for the workplace. You will learn to gather the information you need and put information in a report format so that your readers can easily find what they need. You will also learn the parts you need to include in a report from beginning to end. Information gathering, editing, and proofreading steps will be explained. You will then see what a finished report looks like.

The LearningHUB also offers an [Apprenticeship Bundle](#) which offers the following courses:

- Exploring Apprenticeship
- Apprenticeship Math
- On the Job Report Writing
- Conflict Resolution
- Customer Service Essentials