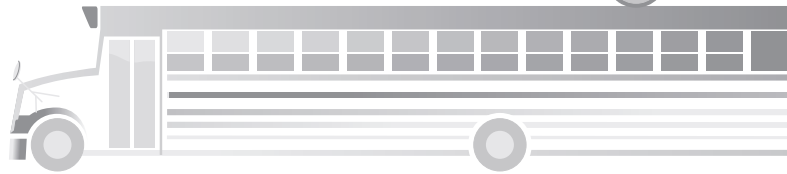


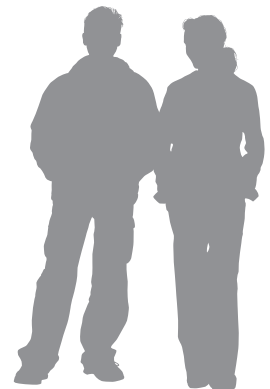


*Motor Carrier Passenger Council Of Canada  
Conseil canadien du transport de passagers*



## **Essential Skills Profile**

### **PROFESSIONAL BUS OPERATOR**



# Introduction

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The modern bus and coach industry plays a major role in the Canadian economy and is an exciting place in which to work and build a career. Moving millions of people daily, the industry looks forward to continued growth. New technology is opening up many new developments, and modern techniques have created a vibrant, responsive industry. The industry is working hard to provide new and better services for all its customers, this in turn means that a wide variety of skills is needed to deliver the highest level of customer care to the public.

The Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada was established in January 1999 in partnership with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) to address human resource issues of value to the motor carrier passenger industry.

## **The sector comprises:**

**Urban transit** systems engaging in the public transportation of passengers in urban areas;

**Intercity bus** lines providing scheduled inter-urban and rural passenger transportation;

**Tour and charter bus** services using motor coaches to transport groups and tourists;

**School bus transportation** providers using traditional yellow buses to transport students to and from school.

**Accessible services** transporting persons with special needs.

The Council represents the interests of more than 100,000 employees across Canada, and is mandated to orchestrate the co-operation of employers, unions, associations and government to improve human resource standards, performance and recognition for the industry.

This Essential Skills Profile was developed and validated by people with extensive knowledge and experience in bus operating training and instruction.

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# Understanding Essential Skills

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Essential Skills are the skills needed for work, learning and life. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change.

Through extensive research, the Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified and validated nine Essential Skills. These skills are used in nearly every occupation and throughout daily life in different ways and at different levels of complexity. Levels of complexity are a rating tool by which all skills are measured. Complexity levels from 1 (basic tasks) to 4 or 5 (advanced tasks) are assigned to example tasks performed by a worker in a specific job.

## The nine Essential Skills:

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### 1. *Reading Text*

Reading Text refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs. It generally involves reading notes, letters, memos, manuals, specifications, regulations, books, reports or journals.

### 2. *Document Use*

Document Use refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics (eg. line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. For example, graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs and labels are documents used in the world of work.

### 3. *Numeracy*

Numeracy refers to the workers' use of numbers and their being required to think in quantitative terms.

### 4. *Writing*

Writing includes:

- writing texts and writing in documents (for example, filling in forms)
- non-paper-based writing (for example, typing on a computer)

### 5. *Oral Communication*

Oral Communication pertains primarily to the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information by workers in an occupational group.

### 6. *Working with Others*

Working with Others examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks. Do they have to work co-operatively with others? Do they have to have the self-discipline to meet work targets while working alone? This section covers **four types of work contexts**. Knowing whether workers work alone, independently, with partners or as team members will help readers understand the skills workers use in their jobs.

### 7. *Continuous Learning*

Continuous Learning examines the requirement for workers in an occupational group to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge. The following represent the essential skills:

- knowing how to learn;
- understanding one's own learning style;
- knowing how to gain access to a variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities.

### 8. *Thinking Skills*

Thinking Skills differentiates between five different types of cognitive functions. However, these functions are interconnected.

### 9. *Computer Use*

Computer Use indicates the variety and complexity of computer use within the occupational group.

# Essential Skills Profiles

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Essential Skills profiles describe how each of the nine Essential Skills is used by workers in a particular occupation. Over the past several years, the Government of Canada has conducted research examining the skills people use at work. From this research and through interviews with workers, managers, practitioners and leading researchers, approximately 250 Essential Skills profiles have been developed for various occupations of the National Occupational Classification.

## **What the profiles include:**

- A brief description of the occupation;
- A list of the most important Essential Skills;
- Examples of tasks that illustrate how each Essential Skill is applied;
- Complexity ratings that indicate the level of difficulty;
- The physical aspects of performing the job and the attitudes that workers feel are needed to do the job well;
- Future trends affecting Essential Skills.

## **The profiles can be used to help you:**

- Learn more about the skills you need in various occupations;
- Develop workplace training programs, learning plans, or job descriptions;
- Investigate career options;
- Create educational tools to enhance skills development.



# Essential Skills - Professional Bus Operator

*This unit group includes bus drivers from the sectors of Urban transit, Intercity, Tour and charter, School bus, streetcar operators and subway train operators. It also includes paratransport or Accessible service drivers.*

*The most important Essential Skills for bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators are: oral communication, and problem solving.*

## A. Reading Text

The text reading tasks of bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators range from Levels 1 to 3. Typical text reading tasks include reading comments on inspection reports and entries in vehicle maintenance logs.

More complex reading tasks include reading training manuals and defensive driving manuals and reading transit policies and procedures. They may also read legislation such as the Highway Traffic Act.

## B. Use of Documents

Bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators read a number of documents with limited text such as street signs, traffic signals, bus passes and luggage tags. They use transit maps frequently to learn new routes.

They complete a number of forms such as driver time sheets, log books and fare reports. Complexity ratings are at Levels 1 and 2.

## C. Writing

Writing tasks are typically brief. They include writing explanations of vehicle defects on Vehicle Defect forms and writing shift summary reports.

The most complex writing is completing accident or vandalism reports. These must be accurate and precise because they may be used in Court.

## D. Numeracy

Money math and scheduling, budgeting and accounting math are commonly used by bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators. For instance, they collect fares, calculate group fares and may prepare day's end reports accounting for money received. They also use numerical estimation

- e.g., estimating how long it will take to travel a certain distance based on multiple factors such as speed, the number of stops, weather and road conditions.

The most frequent mathematical foundations used are whole numbers (adding and multiplying), fractions and decimals. They may perform currency conversions.

## E. Oral Communication

Oral communication is a core essential skill for bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators. At the most frequent and simple level, they greet passengers and respond to their questions. At a higher level of complexity they communicate with other drivers, dispatchers or radio control to discuss traffic and road conditions and to co-ordinate schedules if required. Their most complex oral communication involves human relations, such as negotiating or otherwise resolving conflicts with passengers. Complexity ratings range from Levels 1 to 3.

## F. Thinking Skills

### 1. Problem Solving

The majority of problems encountered by bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators deal with people, mechanical malfunctions and weather. Problems vary according to the specialty of the driver. For instance, sightseeing tour guides may have to adjust schedules because of the late return of some passengers,

while school bus drivers may have to comfort and assist young children who are unsure where they live. Dealing with construction, heavy traffic and inclement weather requires the development of specific problem solving and coping strategies. Problem solving occurs at Levels 1 to 3, with many problems being at Level 3.

### 2. Decision Making

Bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators constant decisions when driving, such as when to proceed through an intersection and when to pass in traffic. These decisions are critical to the safety of passengers and other vehicles sharing the road. Many decisions involve judgment, such as whether to accept or deny passengers who are late in renewing passes.

The decisions that they make and the way they communicate those decisions have an impact on the public's image of the transit company. Many of their decisions, such as making adjustments to routes in response to construction, have an impact on efficiency. Decision making occurs at Levels 1 to 3.

### 3. Job Task Planning and Organizing

The job task planning of bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators is generally short range. Even though routes may be the same over a period of time, each day is different with new challenges. Planning is more intensive at the beginning of a new route schedule when drivers must familiarize themselves with the routes and with adjoining roads that could be used in an emergency.

Disruptions caused by traffic and weather may be frequent and may call for reprioritizing the schedule. For instance, sightseeing tour bus drivers may have to cut time from scheduled stops. Drivers organize their tasks to save time, such as pre-punching transfers. Job task planning and organizing takes place at Complexity Level 2.

### 4. Significant Use of Memory

Bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators use both short and long term memory. For instance, they remember request stops for a short period of time, such as minutes

or hours, and remember routes and timings over a longer period of time, such as days, months or years. They also memorize codes such as door codes for entry to the transit garage.

### 5. Finding Information

Bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators and other transit operators find information through established sources or sources that can be readily identified. For instance, they talk to other transit employees for

information on routes or use city maps and route schedules. They refer to operators' manuals to gain information on the operation of buses and equipment.

## G. Working with Others

Bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators generally work alone to drive and respond to the needs of passengers. They have interaction with other transit operators such as

dispatchers, radio control and relief drivers. They may need to co-ordinate their schedules with others when sudden changes to routes are being made.

## H. Computer Use

Bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators may use a range of computerized equipment, such as computerized

fare boxes and automated vehicle locators (AVL). They may also receive e-mail messages at the garage or transit office.

## I. Continuous Learning

Bus drivers, subway and streetcar operators participate in training when new bus models are introduced and attend regular refreshers. They take a variety of safety related courses such as Transporting Dangerous Goods (TDG),

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and First Aid. Other ways they learn include reading newsletters and attending specialty courses relating to subjects such as supervisory skills or stress management.

## J. Future Trends Affecting Essential Skills

Further computerization of fare boxes and location systems will call for a greater knowledge of computers. More effective communication may be required to deal with a

diverse population of passengers, many of whom do not speak the official languages or who have special needs.

