

Cooks

NOC 6242

Introduction

Cooks prepare and cook a wide variety of foods. They are employed in restaurants, hotels, hospitals and other health care institutions, central food commissaries, educational institutions and other establishments. Cooks are also employed aboard trains, ships and at construction and logging camps.

The most important Essential Skills for Cooks are:

- Oral Communication
- Problem Solving
- Job task planning and organizing

Document Sections

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Writing
- Numeracy
- Oral Communication
- Thinking Skills
 - Problem Solving
 - Decision Making
 - Critical Thinking
 - Job Task Planning and Organizing
 - Significant Use of Memory
 - Finding Information
- Working with Others
- Computer Use
- Continuous Learning
- Notes

A. Reading Text

Reading Text

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
Typical	1 to 3	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read instructions on the operation of appliances and equipment, such as dishwashers, deep fryers and ovens. (1) • read rules for keeping cooking and stewarding areas clean. (2) • read recipes and use them to prepare food. (2) , (frequently) • read cooking texts and/or trade magazine articles and read special theme recipes on-line in order to gather suggestions for future banquets. (3) , (occasionally) • may read and interpret vendor purchase agreements. (3)
Most Complex	3	

Reading Summary

The symbol √ is explained in the Use of Symbols section.

Type of Text	Purpose for Reading			
	To scan for specific information/To locate information	To skim for overall meaning, to get the 'gist'	To read the full text to understand or to learn	To read the full text to critique or to evaluate
Forms	√		√	
Labels	√	√	√	
Notes, Letters, Memos		√		
Manuals, Specifications, Regulations	√		√	
Reports, Books, Journals		√	√	√

B. Document Use

Document Use

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
Typical	1 to 3	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpret Occupational Health and Safety hazard symbols. (1) • read product labels to identify any ingredients that may be allergenic or excluded from restricted diets. (1) • read and enter data on the freezer temperature recording chart. (twice daily) (1) • check off items and quantities on delivery checklists. (1) • complete chef report sheets showing the number of entrees prepared. (1) • use item listing forms for ordering specific products, supplies and produce. (2) • may draw diagrams showing the arrangement of items on the plate. (2)
Most Complex	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpret customer satisfaction ratings displayed on charts. (2) • cross check the Stock Reconciliation form with the sign-out form to ensure accountability and adequate inventory. (2) • read customer orders and prepare accordingly. (2) • read event confirmation sheets in order to plan for events. The confirmation sheets contain information on the client, number of guests, times, location, liquor information, décor and furniture and detailed catering information, including costs. (3) • refer to salesmen's market reports regarding the availability and cost of goods in order to make appropriate menu decisions. (3) , (weekly)

Document Use Summary

- Read signs, labels or lists.
- Complete forms by marking check boxes, recording numerical information or entering words, phrases, sentences or text of a paragraph or more. The list of specific tasks varies depending on what was reported.
- Read completed forms containing check boxes, numerical entries, phrases, addresses, sentences or text of a paragraph or more. The list of specific tasks varies depending on what was reported.
- Read tables, schedules or other table-like text (e.g., read work shift schedules).
- Enter information on tables, schedules or other table-like text.
- Interpret information on graphs or charts.
- Draw, sketch or form common shapes such as circles, triangles, spheres, rectangles, squares, etc.
- Make sketches.
- Obtain information from sketches, pictures or icons (e.g., computer toolbars).

C. Writing

Writing

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
Typical	1 to 3	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write and respond to electronic mail primarily for the purpose of internal communications. (1) , (daily) • write brief reminder notes regarding their tasks and list tasks for other staff. (1) • order food ingredients and kitchen supplies (e.g. dishwashing detergent) on-line. (1) , (frequently) • write suggestions for future menus. (2) • write routine memos to management requesting repair work to be done or suggesting purchase of new equipment. (2)
Most Complex	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare documentation after completion of a catering event, outlining what was served, quantities, prices, range of services provided and dates. (3) , (frequently) • may complete accident reports on personal injuries (like burns, cuts and falls) to report to management and justify an insurance claim. (3) , (occasionally) • may write non-routine memos to the supervisor or Human Resources Director describing disciplinary situations. (3) , (occasionally)

Writing Summary

The symbol √ is explained in the Use of Symbols section.

	Purpose for Writing						
Length	To organize/ to remember	To keep a record/to document	To inform/ to request information	To persuade/ to justify a request	To present an analysis or comparison	To present an evaluation or critique	To entertain
Text requiring less than one paragraph of new text	√	√	√				
Text rarely requiring more than one paragraph		√	√				
Longer text							

D. Numeracy

The symbol \surd is explained in the Use of Symbols section.

Numeracy

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
\surd Money Math	1 to 2	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use petty cash to purchase small quantities of supplies needed immediately. (Money Math), (1) • prepare bills for catering functions, including taxes. (Money Math), (2) • establish weekly budgets that include the costs for fresh food, shelf items, kitchen staff requirements, etc. In addition, they establish separate budgets for each of the catering events for the week. This will vary depending on the menu items, number of courses and number of people served. (Scheduling, Budgeting & Accounting Math), (4) • compare quantities of particular ingredients used in various recipes by converting between Imperial, American, and SI (System International) units. For example, a US quart is a .946 litre or .833 Imperial quart. (Measurement and Calculation Math), (2) • measure ingredients according to menu specifications and the number of people to be served. (Measurement and Calculation Math), (2) • analyse consumption patterns from time to time to determine if consumer choices are changing. For example, they may find that, given a choice, 33% of people choose chicken, or on Friday nights the bar generally goes through so many pounds (60 lbs.) of hot wings. They look for patterns, seasonal or otherwise, that may account for changing tastes and use this information in their planning process. (Data Analysis Math), (2) • estimate the amounts of food in different sized containers. (Numerical Estimation), (1) • estimate the yield from a whole salmon for portion sizes. For example, a whole 3 kilograms of salmon may yield 2 kilograms of usable product for portioning. (Numerical Estimation), (2) • estimate the quantity of various menu items that will be consumed during a regular shift. In addition, they estimate supplies required for non-regular shifts, such as a long weekend or a winter festival weekend that they may not have prepared for before. (Numerical Estimation), (3)
\surd Scheduling, Budgeting & Accounting Math	4	
\surd Measurement and Calculation Math	2	
\surd Data Analysis Math	2	
\surd Numerical Estimation	1 to 3	

Math Skills Summary

a. Mathematical Foundations Used

The symbol \surd is explained in the Use of Symbols section.

Mathematical Foundations Used

Code	Tasks	Examples
Number Concepts		
\surd	Whole Numbers	Read and write, count, round off, add or subtract, multiply or divide whole numbers. For example, taking stock inventories; counting ingredients for recipes.
\surd	Rational Numbers - Fractions	Read and write, add or subtract fractions, multiply or divide by a fraction, multiply or divide fractions. For example, halving or doubling the ingredients of a recipe and measuring ingredients in fractions of a whole unit such as $\frac{1}{2}$ a cup or $\frac{1}{4}$ of a litre.
\surd	Rational Numbers - Decimals	Read and write, round off, add or subtract decimals, multiply or divide by a decimal, multiply or divide decimals. For example, may be used in recipes that are written in decimals, as in, use 1 cup of liquid made with .75 cup milk and .25 cup water.
\surd	Rational Numbers - Percent	Read and write percents, calculate the percent one number is of another, calculate a percent of a number. For example, calculating percentage of food wasted or calculating sales tax on items ordered or purchased.
\surd	Equivalent Rational Numbers	Convert between fractions and decimals or percentages. Convert between decimals and percentages. For example, converting recipes from fractions, decimals or percentages to a common preferred notation especially when doing cost analysis.
Patterns and Relations		
\surd	Equations and Formulae	Solve problems by constructing and solving equations with one unknown. Use formulae by inserting quantities for variables and solving. For example, establishing food prices based on a formula that incorporates labour costs, ingredient costs and total sales.
\surd	Use of Rate, Ratio and Proportion	Use a ratio showing comparison between two quantities with the same units. Use a proportion showing comparison between two ratios or rates in order to solve problems. For example, using a ratio of raw product to finished product, as in the ratio of raw meat weight to cooked meat weight. Using a proportion in scaling a recipe for 100 people down to 75. Using scale drawings.

Code	Tasks	Examples
Shape and Spatial Sense		
√	Areas, Perimeters, Volumes	Calculate volumes. For example, calculating how many 6 fluid oz portions of soup servings will be available from a 20 litre soup pot. Recognizing common angles. Drawing, sketching and forming common forms and figures.
Statistics and Probability		
√	Summary Calculations	Calculate averages. Calculate rates other than percentages. Calculate proportions or ratios. For example, add the total sales of a particular menu item over the month and calculate its average consumption per day.
√	Statistics and Probability	Use descriptive statistics (e.g. collecting, classifying, analyzing and interpreting data). Use inferential statistics (e.g. using mathematical theories of probability, making conclusions about a population or about how likely it is that some event will happen). For example, estimating client consumption based on summary calculations of similar events held previously, incorporating any variables. Using tables, schedules or other table-like text. Using graphical presentations.

b. How Calculations are Performed

- In their heads.
- Using a pen and paper.
- Using a calculator.
- Using a computer.

c. Measurement Instruments Used

- Time. For example, using digital and conventional clocks and timers.
- Weight or mass. For example, using balance scales, portion scales, spring mechanism scales and digital/electronic scales.
- Distance or dimension. For example, using measuring cups and ladles.
- Liquid volume. For example, using measuring cups and ladles.
- Temperature. For example, using various thermometers e.g., meat, oil, candy and freezer thermometers.
- Pressure. For example, using gauges.
- Use the SI (metric) measurement system.
- Using the imperial measurement system.

E. Oral Communication

Oral Communication

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
Typical	1 to 3	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • place supply orders by phone. (1) • call maintenance personnel to request repair of equipment. (1) • may chat briefly with guests at their tables to ascertain satisfaction with the food served. (2) • interact with servers to clarify orders or to explain how to serve specialty dishes, such as salmon wrapped in a banana leaf. (2) • talk to dishwashers and stewards about cleanup and the availability of cutlery or dishes. (2) • interact with delivery personnel who deliver food items to the kitchen. (2) • may assign the day's tasks and duties to those whom they supervise. (2) , (daily)
Most Complex	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resolve conflicts between colleagues involving minor complaints, such as differences of opinion about use of kitchen equipment. (2) • discuss deadlines and timeframes with colleagues to coordinate the sharing of equipment and workspace. This can be complicated when the restaurant is busy or when several catering events overlap. The effectiveness of this communication has a large impact on efficiency. (3) • liaise interdepartmentally with bartenders or housekeeping staff who set up tables for events and functions. (3)

Modes of Communication Used

- In person.
- Using a telephone.
- Using a two-way radio or other such means.

Environmental Factors Affecting Communication

The kitchen environment can be very noisy because of the use of kitchen equipment such as mixers and dishwashers. Such noise may interfere with concentration levels and may lead to difficulty in communicating orally with co-workers in the kitchen.

Oral Communication Summary

The symbol √ is explained in the Use of Symbols section.

Purpose for Oral Communication (Part I)						
Type	To greet	To take messages	To provide /receive information, explanation, direction	To seek, obtain information	To co-ordinate work with that of others	To reassure, comfort
Listening (little or no interaction)						
Speaking (little or no interaction)			√			
Interact with co-workers		√	√	√	√	
Interact with those you supervise or direct		√	√	√	√	
Interact with supervisor/ manager		√	√	√	√	
Interact with peers and colleagues from other organization						
Interact with customers/ clients/ public			√	√		
Interact with suppliers, servicers		√	√	√	√	
Participate in group discussion						
Present information to a small group						
Present information to a large group						

The symbol √ is explained in the Use of Symbols section.

		Purpose for Oral Communication (Part II)				
Type	To discuss (exchange information, opinions)	To persuade	To facilitate, animate	To instruct, instill understanding, knowledge	To negotiate, resolve conflict	To entertain
Listening (little or no interaction)						
Speaking (little or no interaction)						
Interact with co-workers	√	√		√	√	
Interact with those you supervise or direct	√	√		√	√	
Interact with supervisor/ manager	√	√		√	√	
Interact with peers and colleagues from other organization						
Interact with customers/ clients/ public	√	√			√	
Interact with suppliers, servicers	√	√		√	√	
Participate in group discussion						
Present information to a small group						
Present information to a large group						

F. Thinking Skills

1. Problem Solving

Problem Solving

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
Typical	1 to 3	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• may have to deal with an employee being absent or late by either calling in a part-time worker or extending the shifts of present employees as per guidelines. (1)• may find that they are out of a specific herb, such as fresh basil. They substitute it using dried basil or a complementary herb such as parsley. (2)• may find that supplies received do not meet the required quality standards. They may raise this matter at the next staff meeting or bring it to the attention of their supervisor. (2)• may realize that the soup has not turned out as expected. The problem may be resolved by adding another ingredient and remixing. If this fails to improve the taste, they may have to start again, using different ingredients. (2)
Most Complex	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• may find that room service staff do not pick up completed orders in a timely fashion, leading to complaints from guests. They examine their procedures to see if they can improve their own timing in making pickup requests. When they are satisfied that their procedures are clear, they call the room service supervisor to discuss ways in which they can speed up service. (3)

2. Decision Making

Decision Making

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
Typical	1 to 3	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• decide what supplies need to be ordered and when. (1)• decide which sauces will be most complementary to a meal. (1)• routinely make menu decisions based on seasonal availability of ingredients, marketing trends and happenings in their locality. (2) , (daily or weekly)• decide what products to substitute in an order when changes are required because of allergies, dietary factors, product shortages or cost. (2)
Most Complex	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• make a decision, in consultation with management, on whether to buy certain pre-prepared food items or to prepare from scratch, based on cost comparison and food quality. (2)• decide when to begin to cook an order so that it will be ready at the same time as another order. This timing is critical to customer satisfaction. Many factors relating to availability of equipment, complexity of recipes and customer preferences are taken into consideration in determining the timing. (3)

3. Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking information was not collected for this profile.

4. Job Task Planning and Organizing

Job Task Planning and Organizing

Complexity Level	Examples
3	<p data-bbox="522 373 954 411">Own job planning and organizing</p> <ul data-bbox="552 426 1421 980" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="552 426 1421 716">• It is very important for cooks to plan tasks and to review work priorities and deadlines on an hourly, daily and weekly basis in order to ensure a smooth workflow and maximum efficiency. They coordinate their work plans with co-workers to schedule access to ovens and equipment and coordinate work between various work stations. Menus are generally planned on a longer basis, usually monthly. They also plan regularly for an adequate stock of supplies and the rotation of supplies.<li data-bbox="552 730 1421 980">• Short term planning and organizing is also important since the cook may be working on 30 dinners at the same time. They need to plan the timing of specific dishes so that food is ready to be served to all the persons at a table at the same time. To save time, cooks may prepare and freeze some dishes, such as large pots of soup, in advance.

5. Significant Use of Memory

Examples

- remember details of orders such as how many steaks are to be rare, medium or well done and which are to be served with extra vegetables.
- remember details of customer food allergies communicated to them by servers so they can check that sauces and ingredients are safe for specific orders.
- memorize multiple cooking processes involved with different kinds of cooking. For example, they memorize the steps in preparing and baking a pasta dish.

6. Finding Information

Finding Information

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
Typical	2	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• may search on the Internet for specialty recipes and suppliers. (2)• refer to various cookbooks and trade magazines to find information on food presentation and garnishes. For instance, they may search for how to use berries and products such as grenadine to adapt a cake to a Valentine's theme. (2)• visit other restaurants to find new trends and recipes. (2)

G. Working with Others

Participation in Supervisory or Leadership Activities

- Participate in formal discussions about work processes or product improvement.
- Have opportunities to make suggestions on improving work processes.
- Monitor the work performance of others.
- Inform other workers or demonstrate to them how tasks are performed.
- Orient new employees.
- Assign routine tasks to other workers.
- Assign new or unusual tasks to other workers.
- Identify training that is required by, or would be useful for, other workers.
- Deal with other workers' grievances or complaints.

H. Computer Use

Computer Use

Tasks	Complexity Level	Examples
Typical	3	<p>Cooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• use word processing to write memos for fellow workers and submit ideas for recipes. (1)• use a database (CD-ROM), on-line with a manufacturer or the local network to find recipes by performing queries. (2)• use a spreadsheet to check out the inventory of specific items, e.g. canned fruit, various kinds of pastas, sugar, etc. (2)• use communications software to send out e-mail and search for recipes on the Internet. (2)• use a spreadsheet to determine what quantities of each ingredient is required to make up 20 orders instead of 1 by using formulae. (2)

Computer Use Summary

- Use word processing.
- Use a database.
- Use a spreadsheet.
- Use communications software.

I. Continuous Learning

How Learning Occurs

Learning may be acquired:

- As part of regular work activity.
- From co-workers.
- Through training offered in the workplace.
- Through reading or other forms of self-study
 - at work.
 - on worker's own time.
 - using materials available through work.
 - using materials obtained through a professional association or union.
 - using materials obtained on worker's own initiative.
- Through off-site training
 - during working hours at no cost to the worker.

J. Other Information

In addition to collecting information for this Essential Skills Profile, our interviews with job incumbents also asked about the following topics.

Attitudes

Cooks need to be physically fit and able to stand for extended periods of time during the shift. Team work was rated very high by all interviewees. They also mentioned that this is a very high pressure job, requiring excellent organizational skills. Cooks also need to be able to accept constructive criticism and to be adaptable to quickly changing needs in a fast paced environment. The cooks interviewed said that cooks have to be extremely focused and attentive to details. Being well disciplined and reliable are considered definite assets.

Future Trends Affecting Essential Skills

With stringent legislation regarding health and safety, cooks will be doing more documentation of daily activities. This will mean greater use of writing and increased text reading and interpretation. Growing health consciousness and greater emphasis on the nutritional values of food has resulted in a trend for lighter and more wholesome meals. This will require cooks to develop their finding information skills as they search for new recipes. In addition, computer use will become a greater priority for many cooks as the need to locate information quickly via the Internet accelerates. Many cooks are expected to show artistic ability in food displays and participate in competitions. Continuous learning will thus be essential to cooks as they hone these skills through attending specialty seminars and learning from peers and experts.

K. Notes

This profile is based on interviews with job incumbents across Canada and validated through consultation with industry experts across the country.

For information on research, definitions, and scaling processes of Essential Skills Profiles, please consult the Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles (<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/les/profiles/readersguide.shtml>).