

Name: _____ Class: _____

Life Skills

By Set to Go
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How do people successfully face the challenges of everyday life? This informational text explores the life skills necessary for independence, health, and emotional well-being. As you read, take notes on the key life skills and why they are significant in our everyday lives.

- [1] Every moment, sometimes without even thinking about it, we rely on things we've learned that help manage our daily lives. These are called life skills. The term refers to a range of skills, from managing your finances and your relationships, to how well you perform at school. A life skill is any skill that you might need to help improve the quality of your life. There is no fixed list of life skills; there are so many of them! Some are more relevant to people than others. Learning how to use a computer or how to drive are useful life skills for most people. But learning how to raise children are life skills that parents need. Learning how to take notes in class is an important life skill for students.



"Young people in conversation" by Alexis Brown is licensed under CCO

Because life skills can include the ability to manage many aspects of your life, the development of these skills can have a direct impact on how we feel about ourselves, our emotional well-being, our physical health, and even our independence! Our ability to master life skills can have a significant outcome on the quality of our lives.

How we gain early life skills.

Young people acquire¹ a range of cognitive,² emotional and social skills as they grow. Most of the time these skills begin developing unconsciously in us as children, as a result of interactions with family and our surroundings. By the time we are around the age of 5 or 6, we spend more time in school interacting with teachers and classmates than with our family. Our experiences at school begin to have a huge impact on the development of our life skills. We learn how to play, communicate and cooperate with others. We begin to learn how to take care of our own belongings. We begin to take on tasks on our own.

1. learn or develop

2. relating to the mental action of gaining knowledge through thought and experience

While the basics of learning to manage our emotions and relationships are developed as young children, these relationships become more varied and complex as we mature. Our ideas and feelings also begin to grow more varied (assuming all is proceeding well enough). The ongoing development of these internal skills is an important element as we transition through middle school and high school. Furthermore, young people who are lacking in these skills are at higher risk of emotional, social and even academic problems. They also have a higher risk of experiencing difficulties when making the transition³ into college and adulthood.

Key Life Skills

[5] Even though there is no definitive⁴ list of life skills, there are six key areas:

Communication and Interpersonal Skills — These are the skills that we use to work with other people, including how we receive and convey meaning to one another, whether verbally, physically or written.

Decision-making and problem-solving — These are the skills that we use to select a course of action based on our knowledge and experience, to identify and understand problems and generate solutions.

Creative thinking and critical thinking — These are the skills required to think in different and unusual ways, to come up with new ideas, and analyze facts to form judgments.

Self-awareness and empathy — Self-awareness is the ability you need to understand yourself, your emotions, feelings, motives and desires, especially in relation to others. Empathy plays a big role in our ability to relate and connect with others in personal, academic and professional settings. It helps us to treat others with kindness and respect. It is the ability to see or understand something from another person's perspective.

[10] Assertiveness and self-control — These are the skills you need to be self-assured and confident without being aggressive. You'll also rely on these skills to maintain your composure during times when circumstances and emotions might have the ability to influence your behavior.

Resilience — These are the skills you need in order to cope with and recover from setbacks.

3. the process or period of changing from one condition to another

4. **Definitive** (*adjective*): Clearly stated or decided

Life Skills in the Classroom

Just as you cannot learn to cook by reading cookbooks or to play a musical instrument by listening to music on YouTube, skills like self-awareness, recognizing personal values, perseverance, managing relationships, etc. cannot be taught effectively within the classroom — they need to be experienced. However, there is much that can be done in school — both in the classroom and in other settings — that can promote and enhance these skills. Social and emotional skills can be enhanced when teachers and administrators model attitudes and communications that promote curiosity, self-exploration, awareness of and sensitivity to the views and feelings of others. They can promote deep reading and analytical thinking,⁵ group activities and the like. Similarly, classwork and other activities that are intellectually engaging, and that provide opportunities for thoughtful feedback and positive interaction with teachers and fellow students, can be valuable ingredients in helping promote a positive self-image, as well as perseverance and grit.

Life skills: the pathway toward independence.

An important part of growing up is learning how to take care of yourself. By the time we leave home to live on our own, we need to possess a basic set of life skills. This includes the ability to take care of our own eating, sleeping, health, finances, shopping, and laundry. These skills may seem rudimentary,⁶ but when put into action they are practical, powerful and allow us to enjoy independence. Getting a handle on these life skills, and taking steps to take care of ourselves, will help prepare us for greater independence and the experiences of adulthood.

Life Skills: What you can do today to get started

A way we can stay healthy and prepare for future challenges is to maintain positive life skills and self-care strategies.

- [15] Believe it or not, you're supposed to get between 9 – 9 ½ hours of sleep per night. When was the last time you got that much sleep? Sleep and rest are incredibly important for your well-being — it's a simple life skill (even if it is not always so simple to get the right amount of sleep) that can have a really positive impact on many parts of your life. Good sleep improves learning, concentration, memory, mood, attitude, energy, digestion, and heart health; it promotes growth, performance and safety. A good rule of thumb — if you're feeling tired, moody, sick or just off, try getting a good night's sleep!

Good nutrition is another life skill that can promote emotional and physical health. This is something you can teach yourself and practice every day. You can read about it or ask a health professional about nutritious foods. You should aim for a balanced diet and avoid things such as too much caffeine or sugar. Remember that when your body is healthy and in nutritional balance, you're bound to feel your best — and feeling your best can boost your emotional health.

5. detailed examination of the elements or structure of something

6. **Rudimentary** (*adjective*): basic

Another life skill that will benefit your emotional and physical health is exercise. Exercise can boost your mood and release stress. It can be a good way to take your mind off your problems and help you cope. Exercise is good for physical strength, energy and stamina and helps release “feel-good” hormones called endorphins. Exercise doesn’t solve problems, but it’s a life skill that can boost your ability to face them.

Besides taking care of your physical and mental health, what is self-care? It’s the skills that allow you to take care of your possessions, your finances, your studies, your to-do lists, your time, to name a few! It is an important life skill to keep track of, take responsibility for, and take care of all the things that go into managing your life. When you’re independent and no longer living with your parents or guardians, it’s going to be up to you to develop the skills to manage your “stuff” on your own.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: What is the central idea of the text?
 - A. Young adults will become failures if they are not able to function independently.
 - B. Teachers need to spend more time aligning their lessons to the six key life skills areas.
 - C. Even though life skills are not directly taught, learning them has a profound impact on adult life.
 - D. Regular exercise and balanced nutrition are essential components for independent adult self-care.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Furthermore, young people who are lacking in these skills are at higher risk of emotional, social and even academic problems." (Paragraph 4)
 - B. "However, there is much that can be done in school — both in the classroom and in other settings — that can promote and enhance these skills." (Paragraph 12)
 - C. "These skills may seem rudimentary, but when put into action they are practical, powerful and allow us to enjoy independence." (Paragraph 13)
 - D. "Good nutrition is another life skill that can promote emotional and physical health." (Paragraph 16)

3. Which quotation best describes the relationship between life skills and independence?
 - A. "Every moment, sometimes without even thinking about it, we rely on things we've learned that help manage our daily lives." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "Our experiences at school begin to have a huge impact on the development of our life skills." (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "You'll also rely on these skills to maintain your composure during times when circumstances and emotions might have the ability to influence your behavior." (Paragraph 10)
 - D. "A way we can stay healthy and prepare for future challenges is to maintain positive self-care strategies." (Paragraph 14)

4. Which quote does the author use to support the idea that the ongoing development of life skills is necessary?
 - A. "Most of the time these skills begin developing unconsciously in us as children, as a result of interactions with family and our surroundings." (Paragraph 3)
 - B. "While the basics of learning to manage our emotions and relationships are developed as young children, these relationships become more varied and complex as we mature." (Paragraph 4)
 - C. "Empathy plays a big role in our ability to relate and connect with others in personal, academic and professional settings." (Paragraph 9)
 - D. "When you're independent and no longer living with your parents or guardians, it's going to be up to you to develop the skills to manage your "stuff" on your own." (Paragraph 18)

5. What is the author's purpose in paragraph 12?
- A. to persuade readers that a change in the education system is necessary to teach life skills
 - B. to demonstrate how teachers can indirectly provide life skills instruction
 - C. to argue the importance of including life skills in school curricula
 - D. to provide readers with an illustration of how life skills are taught

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. In addition to the ideas provided in the article, what experiences can help a person gain life skills at home and in school? How do your culture and lifestyle influence the way you develop life skills?
2. Which key area of life skills do you think is most important in building a person's independence? What information from the article best supports your thinking?
3. What life skills do you practice? Which of those skills makes you feel the most confident and independent? Why?
4. Think about independent people you know. What makes them independent? What life skills do they exhibit in their everyday lives? How do you think they developed those life skills?