

Universal Skills for Workplace and Life  
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## Introduction

Throughout life, there are many skills that are requested of us in order to perform as efficiently as possible in both the workplace and in our personal lives. Skills that drive success and that promote positivity. While some skills are more catered to a specific job role or a specific event, there are many skills that can be considered universal. In other words, a skill is considered universal when attributes of the skill can be applied to any setting or any task. It is important to learn universal skills as they can be applicable to just about any job a person decides to do, from being a software developer, a doctor, a lawyer, a writer, a chef, a travel guide, a realtor, and more. When discussing universal skills, it is important to name three of the most important skills that will guarantee success. These skills include Murphy's Law and its cousin Peter's Law, communication skills, and emotional intelligence. Possessing these three skills has proven to lead to success and positivity in whichever profession or activity a person does. Though there are many other important universal skills a person can learn and possess, these three skills can greatly benefit an individual and be a great starting point in learning other skills.

## Murphy's Law Vs Peter's Law

When discussing universal skills, it is important to discuss one of the more common principles, being Murphy's Law in relation to Peter's Law. To explain the benefits, we must first have an understanding of what exactly Murphy's Law and Peter's Law is. Murphy's Law states that "Anything that can go wrong will go wrong." You may ask yourself how this is a skill? In order for Murphy's Law to become a skill, it must be applied alongside Peter's Law. Peter's Law is considered the opposite of Murphy's Law and states "If anything can go wrong, fix it. To heck with Murphy!" When applying the two together, a person can perform a pro and con analysis and can start to differentiate between the things one can control or change and the things that are simply out of one's control. An example of this would be the weather. While Murphy's law states that if the weather can get bad, it probably will be bad. A person can take this and analyze that this may be true as it is simply out of one's control; however, when applying Peter's Law, that person can also prepare for the inevitable by wearing a rain jacket, utilizing an umbrella, or simply staying indoors to avoid getting wet. Murphy Vs. Peter's law is also thought of as strictly a mindset in which to always think positive when facing challenges. At the same time, it also insists that if a particular act is inevitable, do not stress over it. While Murphy's Law and Peter's Law are more or less anecdotes, the theme or underlying lesson between the two holds power at the workplace and in life in general. In relation to Murphy's Law, yes the other line at the grocery store may very well go faster, but by applying Peter's Law, you can justify your reasonings for staying in the slower line as it probably will have a better outcome in the end. Staying positive in mindset will always prove success and can lead to a healthier lifestyle and productivity, while being a Murphy and applying Murphy's Law without Peter will surely bring you down the latter of success.

## Communication skills

It becomes cliché to assume that communication skills are the foundation to other skills as everyone has to speak to one another in some form or fashion; however, reality shows that a majority of the population lack solid communications skills. Communication skills are applied when listening, speaking, observing, and even empathizing. Though each of these traits can be

categorized as its own individual skill, they all fall under the main topic of communication. It is important to note that if a person excels in listening skills, but lacks in observing, speaking, or empathizing, the balance between healthy communication is greatly offset. It is important to have a solid foundation in all four aspects of communication. Taking a software developer as an example, most may assume that software developers fall short on the need for communication skills as their primary objective is to sit behind a screen and type for the majority of their work life. This cannot be farther from the truth. Software developers must rely on communication between clients, members of other teams, and ironically the computer. Software developers depend on projects or objective for their career, and in order to obtain a project or objective, communication is necessary to determine requirements and needs for the project. If the software developer lacks in speaking or listening skills, the project may very well be inaccurate from what the client has requested of him. Also, it is imperative that a software developer possess observation skills as they will most definitely be required to observe the results of a fully-developed piece of software. If the clients start to question certain functionalities of a piece of software, it is up to the developer to determine what changes need to be made to satisfy that client and even protect their sensitive data. Another example would be a physician. Typically, a physician's main objective is to treat patients and prevent illness. Though this is true, it becomes essential to communicate effectively with a patient to understand his or her needs or issues. Also doctors rely heavily on empathy when communicating, especially when breaking bad news to a client. Today, doctors are just as trained on communication skills, also known in the health industry as bedside mannerism, as they are medicine. Practicing communication skills will most definitely lead to success in any industry and has become one of the most important skills for every industry.

### Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence sounds complicated and very daunting to achieve. Understanding one's emotions may not be at the top of everyone's priority list and oftentimes has been deemed unnecessary to achieve success. Luckily, emotional intelligence is not as difficult to understand or achieve and has actually shown great benefits and importance in any industry. Emotional Intelligence (EI), as defined by MindTools, is "the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, and those of the people around you. People with a high degree of emotional intelligence know what they're feeling, what their emotions mean, and how these emotions can affect other people" [1]. To start, we must understand that we are all human beings. Human beings have emotions, whether that be happiness, sadness, anger, etc. New studies have emerged that relate to human emotions and the impact that they have on individuals in different settings. Regardless of what occupation a person has, emotions are active, and they impact our success in far greater amounts than you might think. Suppose a software developer works twelve-hour workdays for five days a week, every week of the year. Though the developer may enjoy the job, sitting at a computer desk for twelve hours every workday has caused the developer to miss seeing his family and spending time with friends. The developer was taught that chasing his dreams and making a lot of money was the most important aspect of life, but the developer quickly realized that this is not what life is all about. The individual starts to become burnt out at the workplace, shows signs of irritation, and in the end has resulted to severe depression, without even realizing it. This is because the developer has lacked the skill of emotional intelligence. If the developer was self-aware of his or her own feelings, change could have been made to alter

his setting or work schedule in order to prevent the severe outcome of depression. So how does emotional intelligence work? MindTools describes the key elements of emotional intelligence as being self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The more an individual manages each of these specific elements, the greater the individual is emotionally intelligent [1]. Being self-aware relates to understanding one's emotions and how he or she feels and the impact they can have on others. Self-reflection, or asking oneself how they are doing is one of the key traits to achieving self-awareness. Similarly, self-regulated individuals are able to think before they do, whether it be verbally attacking others, or making irrational decisions. If an individual is able to regulate their emotions, they can prevent sudden outburst before they occur. Holding oneself accountable is the number one way of achieving self-regulation. Apart from this, motivation is a key trait to being emotionally intelligent. Individuals who are able to set goals for themselves and hold high standards for their work greatly increase their emotional intelligence. Finding a purpose for your job is a key way to staying motivated. Furthermore, Being empathetic and possessing social skills go hand-in-hand with each other and greatly benefit emotional intelligence. Those who socialize with others and find understanding into other's emotions typically find understanding in their own emotions. For individuals who do not socialize with other individuals become sheltered to reality and are not as trained to dealing with others; therefore, they cannot fully understand their own emotions if they do not regularly experience it in others. Staying social and being empathetic allows for one to put themselves in other people's shoes and look at different perspectives. This, among others, is why emotional intelligence becomes a critical skill in the workplace and in everyday life.

## Sources Cited

- [1]. Mind Tools. (n.d.). Emotional intelligence in leadership: Learning how to be more aware. Retrieved March 23, 2021, from [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_45.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_45.htm)