

Inventory of Personal Skills

This document shows categories of skills and strategies from the [Inventory of Personal Skills](#), along with examples of when we might use these skills in our personal or professional lives. You acquired these skills through your schooling, work, and life experiences. All adult language learners need to acquire these skills, too! Building academic language, language skills and strategies, and critical thinking means **increased rigor in adult English language acquisition instruction**.

Academic language:

- **Adapting language to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks:** You know that you need to address an officer of the law differently than you might a family member. You know that an email to your spouse will be written very differently than a letter to a teacher at school. You use language conventions differently.
- **Using evidence to support an argument:** In a discussion at work, you know the appropriate language to use to support an argument (e.g., “Given what we know about ..., we can see that...” vs. “Well, if you ask me....”)
- **Knowing how to interpret charts and tables:** Charts and tables are a text type (genre) and you know what kind of information they tend to convey. You know the conventions of the headings and the direction to read.

Language strategies and skills:

- **Reading texts differently depending on your purpose:** You probably scan the weather page for the high and low to decide how to dress in the morning, or you do the same while listening to the radio in the morning, listening only for the information you need. When you get to work, you might read an email from your boss about an upcoming structural change in the school very carefully.
- **Using context clues to understand new information:** Think of how often you use pictures, formatting, or the surrounding words in a text to determine the meaning of new words or concepts, or to infer a writer’s opinion (e.g., a bold heading with an exclamation point tells you something about the attitude of the writer).
- **Making inferences and logical guesses:** You most likely “read or listen between the lines” as you interact with others, listen to the news or to a presentation, or read something. You need to find small clues that lead you to infer things that a speaker or author doesn’t explicitly state. For example, you might hear: “The water was rushing over him and he felt nothing beneath his feet.” You would infer that this person is in a lake or the ocean and struggling to stay afloat.

- **Making predictions before reading a text:** When you pick up the paper in the morning, you bring all sorts of prior knowledge to the task and that shapes how you approach your reading. You know what's in the news, so you anticipate certain countries being mentioned.

Critical thinking:

- **Comparing and contrasting ideas or things:** We do this all the time in our daily lives, and this skill becomes a big part of decision making and problem solving (e.g., comparing our options).
- **Solving problems at work:** Here, we use a combination of critical thinking skills. We need to identify the issue, weigh our options, and analyze the pros and cons of those options. We may also use technology as we search for options online.
- **Challenging assumptions:** You come to most listening and reading situations with a set of assumptions and predictions. As you read or listen to something, you are actively reading or listening to verify or challenge your assumptions.
- **Synthesizing information from multiple sources:** When you need to do a presentation or write something for school or work, you don't gather information from only one source. When you are making a major purchase, you may do the same thing. Then you analyze, compare, and contrast the information. You use print and digital literacy in this process as you read online reviews and consumer reports.

In addition to these, the inventory included essential skills such as note-taking and organizing strategies, which may include graphic organizers for planning, outlines for note-taking, or grids for recording information. There is also collaboration with digital literacy in the inventory. Do you work on projects with others using Google docs? Do you use Skype or Go-to Meetings?