

Care Skillsbase: Manage Skills

Specify skills by task

Why create a specification for communication and number skills?

Everyone likes to know what is expected of them at work. Detailed task specifications that explain how to deal with information and communicate are helpful.

Before you begin

You may find it useful to have a range of documents, including:

- job descriptions that refer to the task
- quality standards and risk assessments related to the task
- any record-keeping and report forms related to the task
- quality records associated with the task (e.g. records of previous complaints and/or incidents that indicate the sort of performance problems associated with the task).

You may also find it helpful to ask people with current experience of the task about the steps involved, the difference between doing the task well and doing it poorly and what problems typically arise for post-holders doing the task. You might also check the Dignity in Care Guide (SCIE 2010):

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide15/factors/index.asp>.

People to ask include:

- current post-holders (experienced and inexperienced)
- supervisors and managers
- trainers and assessors

Finally, consider the list of core employability skills on the next page.

Core employability skills for health and social care workers

(Skills and attitudes essential to work in adult social care, from Level 1 Award in Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care, QCF unit ref: PWCS 08)

- Write and speak so that others listen and understand
- Read and understand information shown in a variety of ways, including written and spoken English
- Listen and ask questions to understand other people's points of view
- Understand the need to be reliable and dependable
- Give examples of a care worker acting responsibly and being accountable in a care work setting
- Understand the purpose of policies and procedures in a social care workplace
- Demonstrate an ability to assess situations and identify problems and suggest solutions in a social care workplace scenario
- Know how to help 'customers' and deal with their questions and problems
- Demonstrate willingness to work in a team
- Demonstrate an ability to work well with others
- Be open and respond well to simple changes
- Show interest, initiative and effort
- Understand the need to gain skills and knowledge to support and develop your work
- Be willing to learn from mistakes and accept feedback and offer feedback to others in a positive way
- Be willing to reflect on practice and improve
- Be willing to share skills and to provide feedback to others in a positive way
- Be able to use everyday technology such as mobile phones, email applications and basic word processing
- Be able to make estimates and check calculations for accuracy
- Understand how to add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers and give examples of when each should be used in day- to-day social care work
- Observe and record data accurately and legibly

Step 1 Define the task

Define the task by its purpose and/or intended outcome.

Note:

- who is responsible for the outcome
- who is involved in each element
- standards that define safety and quality for the task.

Step 2 Describe each step as fully as possible

Break the task down into steps identifying the purpose and what must be done to achieve it. Give examples of how you want staff to deal with information and communicate – particularly if you are aware of previous problems.

Ask them to have a look at the Dignity factors (SCIE 2010) available on line at:
<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide15/factors/index.asp>

Sample task specification: Assisting individuals at mealtime

Purpose/outcome: Help individuals eat and drink / ensure they receive adequate nutrition.

Staff involved: Care worker

Standards: CIS 3, 6, 7, 8 / H&SC 024, 026 027, SHC 021

1. Greet the person, showing awareness of privacy and dignity

Show respect for private space, e.g. knock and ask if you can come in before entering the person's room.

2. Find out what the person wants

Speak directly and respectfully to the individual, offer food choices, ask about preferences in seating (e.g. 'I would like to tell you about breakfast/lunch/dinner today. Here is the menu. What would you like? You can eat here or in the dining room. Where would you like to eat?').

3. Ensure the person is seated comfortably and safely

Make sure that the individual is in a safe position. Ask if they are comfortable.

4. Protect the person's clothing

Protect the individual's clothing with a serviette or apron if appropriate. Explain what you are doing. Ask permission before you help them (e.g. 'May I please fix this on to protect your clothing from food?').

5. Ensure hand hygiene

Before assisting the person with food or touching utensils, wash your hands and help them to wash their hands. Explain what you are doing. Ask permission (e.g. 'May I please help you wash your hands?').

6. Encourage independence with eating

If you do not know the person, ask your supervisor about the amount of help they need. During the meal, politely encourage the individual to do as much as they can (e.g. 'Would you like to do that yourself?' 'I will help you if you want, but nurse thinks it is good for you to try to do it if you can.' 'Try to do it first, then I will help if it is too difficult.' 'I am impressed by how much you do for yourself. I hope I am like you when I am your age.').

7. Help the person to eat at their own pace

If helping the individual physically, give small mouthfuls of food and wait until they have finished each mouthful before offering more. When they have finished, check that they have had enough to eat and drink (e.g. 'May I give you any more?' 'Would you like anything else to eat or drink?').

8. Encourage fluid intake

Offer a choice of drinks to the person throughout the meal.

9. Help wash face and hands

At the end of the meal, offer help to the individual with face and hand hygiene. Explain what you are doing and ask permission.

10. Clear eating area

At the end of the meal, put the used dishes on a tray or trolley. Clean the table using the designated cleaners. Take the tray or trolley to the kitchen.

11. Record-keeping and reporting

Complete the food/fluid charts in the individual's room file. Report any difficulties with eating to the RGN staff immediately after the meal. (If you cannot do this, tell your supervisor or make a note of the person's eating difficulty in the daily communications book.) Tell the kitchen staff about any dietary issues.