

Excerpt from: Occupational English Language Requirements for Labourers in Food Processing Plants: A Research Project and Pilot Study for Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, conducted by Hammond & Associates Inc., September 2007

Appendix 10: Speaking and Listening Tasks for Labourers

Social Interaction

Task # 1 – Greet, ask about the other person

CLB: 3

Description/Context: Formulaic expressions; questions/answers are predictable; somewhat limited vocabulary for routine everyday topics

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Good morning. How are things going?
- How was your weekend?
- Hi. How are you doing?
- You okay? Everything alright?
- Hi, I'm _____. This is _____.

Task # 2 – Open, close and respond to short casual small talk.

CLB: 4

Description/Context: Short routine conversations about needs and familiar topics of personal relevance with supportive listeners; answers/questions may be unpredictable

Sample Tasks or Phrases

- When are your holidays?
- Cheer up, it's payday
- Why are you grumpy?
- You did a good job. Good work.
- "Joking around" on the line
- Talking at the Christmas party

Instructions

Task # 3 – Give/follow simple everyday instructions, strongly supported by context/demonstration

CLB: Speaking 4 - 5; Listening 3- 4

Description/Context: Strongly supported by context and demonstration; subject of discussion is familiar, concrete

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Pull out your knife. Sharpen it for me. Let me see. (L2; S3)
- Show me (S3; L2)
- Let me see your gloves. Tuck that in. No, like this. (S3; L2)
- I want ears on those briskets! (S3; L3)
- You go talk to a Blue Hat. (S3; L2)
- Show workers how to put product in the bag (S3; L3)
- Check for splits. These can't go. Oil got on this when they were planning. They'll break apart. They're no good. Don't pick them (S4; L4)

Task # 4 – Give, follow or request simple, everyday directions.

CLB: Speaking/Listening 3- 4

Description/Context: Topics are familiar, routine; can ask and respond to simple questions; directions have three to four steps and are sometimes supported by hand gestures

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- The scissors are by the taping machine. (S3; L3)
- Where do you keep the R5 (ingredient)? (S3; L3)
- When fire alarm rings, tell people where to go. (S4; L3)

Task # 5 – Give or receive a set of instructions on a new procedure, involving multiple steps and explanation/rationale.

CLB: Speaking 4 - 5; Listening 3 - 4

Description/Context: Topics are concrete, familiar with strong visual support (demonstration); procedure is new to the listener; involves some explanation of why this should be done this way

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Show and explain to someone how to trim the thighs (S4; L3)
- Show co-workers how to bag the product, checking for quality (S4; L3)
- Give or receive coaching/training in how to perform a new procedure. (S5; L5)

Suasion

Task # 6 – Request or offer assistance.

CLB: 3-4

Description/Context: immediate/familiar context; at level 4 the request/offer may be less directly stated, requiring some inference and/or not be as immediately apparent.

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Can you help me/get that/cover me/sharpen my knife? (S3)
- Can I get more boxes/a new glove/help with this? (S3)
- Can I help you? (S3)
- Do you need help with that? (S3)
- We need help labelling in the race track. (S4)
- The saw blade needs to be sharpened. (S4)

Task # 7 – Ask for, give or receive permission.

CLB: S 3 - 5 L 3 - 5

Description/Context: request is directly stated or clearly implied; complexity (level) increases with the nature of the request, need to provide a reason for the request.

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Can you work overtime today? (L3)
- Can you come in on Saturday? (L3)
- Can I take my break now? (S3)
- You can take your break now. (L3)
- I have to go to the washroom. (S3)
- Request a change in the schedule/time off/leave early/leave the line to make a phone call; give reason (4)
- ask to change to a new line or job, provide detailed reasons (5)

Task # 8 – Refuse a request or offer an apology; give a simple reason or excuse.

CLB: 4

Description/Context: subject is simple; concrete

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Sorry, I can't work overtime tonight.
- Sorry about that.
- No, I need to take my break now.
- Not right now. Can you wait just a minute?

Task # 9 - Caution, warn or advise someone of danger.

CLB: 3

Description/Context: get someone's attention; problem is immediately apparent, close by or familiar.

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Watch out
- Careful
- Look out - the bread is coming down.
- There's water on the floor there
- The pallet jack is coming through.

Task # 10 – Ask for and provide a simple suggestion, advice or opinion; provide a reason.

CLB: 5

Description/Context: Level varies with whom is being spoken/listened to; the formality of the suggestion and the number of factors involved.

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- What do you think? What if we do it this way... (S5; L4)
- If we work with a partner (to lift the carcass from the line) it's easier than by ourselves. (S5; L5)
- We're having problems with the taping machine. Can we move the good one to the other line? (S5; L5)
- If you grab it from the middle the top tray may fall on you. It's better to hold on to the top tray while you pull it toward you. (S5; L5)

Information

Task # 11 – Relate or explain an incident, accident or series of events.

CLB: 4-6

Description/Context: Level depends on the level of detail required; familiarity, complexity and number of variables

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Describe an accident or a fight between two co-workers. (S4; L4)
- We threw out x amount of 10x16 bread. It was poor quality – lots of bubbles and splits. (S4; L4)
- I stopped the machine because the carcass had a bad smell. I want to clean the machine before I send the meat along the line. (S5; L5)
- Discuss a performance problem in a performance review or disciplinary meeting. (S6; L6)

Task # 12 – Describe a situation, condition or problem

CLB: 3-5

Description/Context: Level depends on a wide range of factors, including the nature/criticality of the condition, the detail/explanation required, relationship/causal nature of factors (this results in that)

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- My wrist hurts. (S3)
- I'm sick. (S3)
- Describe a physical condition that impairs one's ability to work. (S3; L3)
- Discuss a health concern, medical condition or illness with a plant nurse; provide details. (S5; L4)

Task # 13 – Attend meetings or information sessions.

CLB: 4-7

Description/Context: Level depends on the topic/purpose/formality/criticality of the meeting; the speaker's skill and ability/willingness to modify the presentation to the level of the listeners; the expectation for participation on the part of those attending.

Sample Tasks or Phrases:

- Attend line/work unit tailgate meetings regarding (for example) yields, safety issues, production issues or attendance. (S4-6; S4-6)
- Attend a full staff meeting to learn about a new company security system. Show someone how to trim the thighs (S4-7; S4-7)
- Attend a union meeting. Show someone how to trim the thighs (S4-7; S4-7)

Task # 14 – Attend orientation and training sessions.

CLB: 4-8

Description/Context: Level depends on a wide range of factors: the complexity and criticality of the topic; the nature of the topic (e.g., concrete, visible, theoretical, abstract); the trainers' skill and ability/willingness to modify the training content and process to the level of the listeners; the difficulty of the training materials (e.g. handouts; video/audio resources); the expectation for participation/interaction in the lesson; whether or not and how learning is evaluated.

Sample Tasks:

- Video *The Winning Label* – WHMIS training video - silent, highly visual presentation using animated characters running a race, encountering products with WHMIS labels. Video would be supported by some verbal explanation/pre-teaching of the symbols. (L3)

- On the job assistance offered by lead hands and supervisors in one plant involved largely demonstration, supplemented by explanation. (S/L3-4)
- Video: “An Ounce of Prevention in the Red Meat” - video describes different types of parasites that can cause disease in humans; includes lots of interviews and commentary where the words do not relate to what is being shown on the screen; hockey analogy and commentary from a professional hockey player; technical vocabulary given nicknames (“SAM” for salmonella) (L7-8)

Appendix 11: Reading and Writing Tasks for Labourers

Social Interaction

Task # 1 – Get information from short notes and messages

CLB: Reading 3

Description/Context: Can find specific detailed information in simple texts. Language is concrete, factual and literal. Most content words are everyday words; context is familiar and predictable to the reader.

Sample Tasks or Texts:

- Comprehend a bulletin board message from someone looking for a ride. Get name and phone number. (R 3)

Instructions

Task # 2 – Understand and follow moderately complex written instructions.

CLB: Reading 4 - 5

Description/Context:

The researchers collected a number of examples at Reading 4: Plain language used; most words are familiar to the learner; language is mostly concrete, factual and literal. Instructions are common everyday instructions.

A number of examples at Reading 5 were also collected. Language is mostly concrete and factual with some technical language. Instructions may be for a 7 – 10 step procedure. Workers may have to sign that they have read and understood the procedure. In some cases workers must check off operating procedures completed.

Note: This task was part of the everyday job requirements in one plant. In another plant it was an occasional task. In other plants, these materials were included in the orientation, but workers were not required to do this level of reading on a day-to-day basis.

Sample Tasks or Texts:

- Safe Lifting Procedures. (R 4)
- General Housekeeping Rules and Procedures. (R 4)
- Safety Shoe Policy (R 4)
- Pre-post operating checklist for equipment; Before going home cleaning checklist. (R 5)
- Task procedure (e.g. proper knife care) Procedure has to be signed off for each new task employee undertakes. (R 5)
- Specific procedures (do's and don'ts) and required PPE. (R 5)

Suasion

Task #3: Read signs and labels that are common to the plant

CLB: Reading 2

Description/Context: Understand signs, labels

Sample Tasks or Texts:

- Understand WHMIS labels on bleach and cleaning supplies
- “Broken”, “Garbage”
- Warning signs: “Slip hazard” “Electric shock hazard”
- Understand correct label to use in packaging a product

Task #4: Read posters and whiteboard notices that change everyday.

CLB: Reading 2

Description/Context: Able to find a specific piece of information in a simple text, mostly in simple text with clear layout. Text may be 2 – 3 sentences in length. Vocabulary includes simple learned phrases, known to the reader.

Sample Tasks or Texts:

- “15 min OT everyone” (bulletin board notice)
- “Kill floor OT – mezzanine 4:00”
- Memo to all employees done in chart form with day, shift and number of hours (done in large font)
- Whiteboard summary of daily and weekly counts for: head kill; product downtime; live, aorta and heart yields)
- Information about daily production targets. Chart with product codes and numbers.
- “Aprons, sleeves and rubber gloves must be worn in this area.”
- Read short notes from the last shift – x happened. We called maintenance.

Task # 5: Get information from short business notices.

CLB: Reading 3 -4

Description/Context:

Reading 3: Can find specific detailed information in plain language texts with clear layout. Language is concrete, factual and literal. Most content words are familiar to the reader.

Reading 4: Language is mostly concrete, factual and literal with some abstract vocabulary items. Can get information from plain language news items and classified ads.

Sample Tasks or Texts:

- “June 2/2007 Boner’s clean bone. Don’t go too deep on blade bone.” (R 3)
- Identify what work to be done from Production Report (R 3)
- Fine correct specifications and set machine to carry out specific tasks (e.g. cutting off wingtips) (R 3)
- Read a hygiene poster about how to dress for the floor (R 3)
- Follow procedure at eye-wash station (R 3)
- Identify key information in a job posting to make decision on whether to apply (R 4)

Task #6: Fill out forms

CLB: Writing 3 – 5

Description/Context:

There is considerable range in the level of difficulty of the numerous forms that employees have to fill out. Many (but not all) of these forms are completed at the time of orientation. Some plants have simplified their in-house forms to make them very user-friendly. Other forms are more complex and difficult to follow.

CLB 3: Forms are simple with no more than 15 – 20 items.

CLB 5: Forms are moderately complex in format, up to 20 – 30 items.

Sample Tasks or Texts:

One company has simplified the following forms which would be at CLB 3 level:

- Application for vacation
- Direct Deposit
- Address change forms
- City bus pass form
- Emergency contact forms

Typical forms that are moderately complex and are closer to CLB 5 level include:

- Union membership forms

- Extended Health Care Claim Form
- Official dues check off form

INFORMATION

Task #7: Read company training materials, handbooks and information bulletins

CLB: Reading 3 – 8 (The majority of these materials would be in the CLB 4-5 range)

Description/Context: There is significant variation in the level of difficulty of these materials. Most plants seem to have modified at least some of their documents and attempted to use plain language. However, there is sometimes even variation in level of difficulty in components of the same document.

Note: If all company material were written in plain language, we estimate the level of difficulty of most materials could be reduced to about the CLB Reading 3-4 level.

CLB 3: Simple passages with everyday, familiar vocabulary

CLB 4: Passages have mostly familiar, predictable context. Plain language with few idioms.

CLB 5: Passages are moderately demanding. Language is mostly concrete and factual with some abstract, conceptual and technical vocabulary items.

CLB 7: Language is concrete and abstract, conceptual and technical. Some information is explicit; other is implied. Expression can be complex in range and demanding to follow.

Sample Tasks or Texts:

- Read a GMP training PowerPoint presentation (short sentences or bullets, with some graphics to support) (R 3)
- WHMIS training PowerPoint slides (see above)(R 3)
- Orientation handbook (Plain Language Revision)(R 3)
- Information Handout “Ten commandments of Knife Safety” (R 4)
- On the Job Safety Manual – 25 page manual; approximately one topic per page. Clearly written but a fair amount of technical vocabulary is required for specific topics. (R 5)
- Harassment/Discrimination Policy (written in legalistic language) (R 7)
- Code of Business Conduct (7 pages written in legal language. Employee must sign that they will comply with the policies) (R 7)

Task #8: Describe an incident.

CLB: Writing 4

Description/Context: We were told that employees do not need to complete accident reports. Their supervisors complete the accident reports and read them to the employee to confirm. Translators are sometimes used. At the same time, one of the unions

provided samples of incident reports that had been completed by employees. So, it appears there are some occasions when brief reports or a few sentences are completed.

Sample Tasks or Texts:

- Complete an incident report (in the case of a fight)
- Record what happened in daily production if having troubles