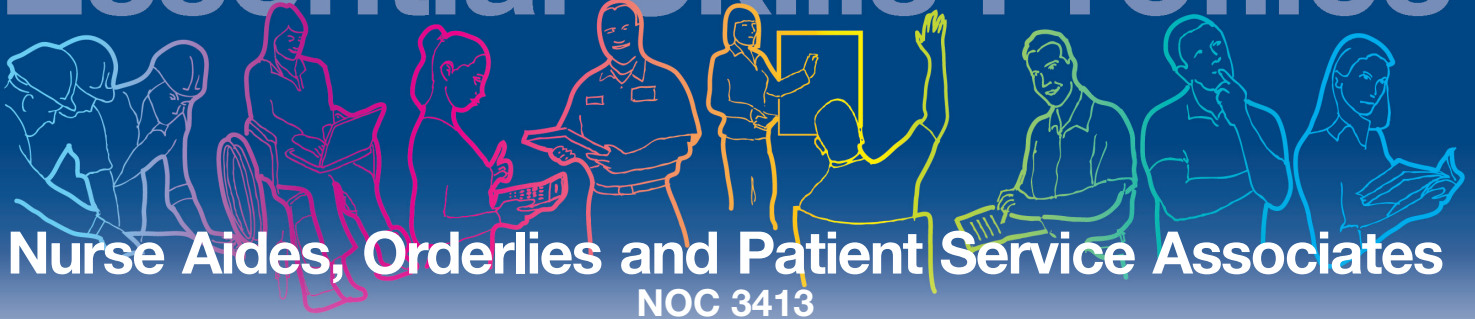




Now and Tomorrow
Excellence in Everything We Do

Essential Skills Profiles



Introduction

Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates assist nurses, hospital staff and physicians in the basic care of patients.

Note: Each Essential Skills task is followed by a number in brackets, e.g. (2), which is the estimated complexity level for that task. Tasks are assigned levels, ranging from Level 1 (basic task) to Levels 4 or 5 (advanced task), and are listed in increasing order of complexity. The complexity levels may vary based on the requirements of the workplace.



Reading

- Read labels on containers for instructions and precautions. (1)
- Read short notes from co-workers, e.g. read short notes from co-workers to learn about patients' special requirements. (1)
- Read short comments on a variety of patient care, test and admission forms. (1)
- Read memos, bulletins and notices, e.g. read memos and bulletins from supervisors to learn about changes to operating procedures and schedules. (2)
- May read aloud, e.g. read personal letters, newspapers, magazines and books to patients to entertain them. (2)
- Read short reports, e.g. read short reports from nurses to learn about incidents that occurred during earlier shifts. (2)
- Read workplace safety materials, e.g. read Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) to understand the chemical composition and possible hazards of products. (2)
- Read brochures and pamphlets, e.g. read brochures to learn about particular diseases and the use of equipment. (3)
- Read policy and procedure manuals, e.g. read policies regarding patient care and procedures to learn how to correctly respond to events, such as medical emergencies and fires. (3)
- May read profiles or reports, e.g. read patient profiles to learn about the health, behaviour and nutritional needs of specific patients and to stay informed of their progress. (3)



Document Use

- Locate data, such as hazards, dates, times, codes and quantities, on labels, e.g. locate symbols that identify hazardous materials. (1)
- Locate information in lists, e.g. use lists to locate patient names and dietary requirements. (1)
- Complete forms, e.g. record data, such as dates, times, weights, blood pressures and identification numbers, on a variety of patient care, test and admission forms. (2)
- Locate data, such as tasks, times, dates, hours and quantities, in a variety of charts, tables and schedules. (2)
- May interpret technical drawings, e.g. scan drawings to learn how to assemble a range of motion equipment used by patients. (2)



Writing

- Write reminders and short notes, e.g. write short notes to inform co-workers about tasks that need to be completed. (1)
- Write short comments in a variety of logbooks and forms, e.g. write short notes on forms to record patients' progress, conditions and behaviours. (1)
- Write short incident reports, e.g. write incident reports to document events, such as patient falls, medication errors and injuries. (2)



Numeracy

- May count patients' money when patients are admitted into treatment. (1)
- Measure patients' temperatures, respiration rates, weights and heights, liquid inputs and outputs, vital signs and blood pressures. (1)
- Compare measurements of vital signs, such as temperature, heart rate and blood pressure, to normal ranges. (1)
- May estimate the amount of supplies that need to be ordered. (1)
- Calculate summary measures, e.g. use multiple blood pressure readings to establish average systolic and diastolic measurements. (2)
- May estimate how long it will take to dress, bathe and exercise patients, taking into account how much the patients can do, whether they are co-operative and whether the work may be disrupted by co-workers. (2)



Oral Communication

- Listen for ringing bells and patients calling for assistance. (1)
- Greet patients and family members and make general conversation to help them feel comfortable. (1)
- Talk to co-workers, such as supervisors, e.g. speak with supervisors to co-ordinate activities and report on the condition of patients. (2)
- Talk with patients to obtain information on their current state, lend support when informed of pain and discomfort, explain medical procedures and respond to questions and concerns. (2)
- Participate in staff meetings to make suggestions about improvements to work processes and discuss schedules, duties and patient care. (2)
- May provide detailed instructions, e.g. may explain detailed patient-care procedures to new employees. (3)



Thinking

- Evaluate the safety of work conditions. They consider the hazards presented by chemicals, equipment, heavy weights and physically aggressive patients. (1)
- Locate the telephone numbers of physicians using telephone books, call sheets and electronic databases. (1)
- Encounter uncooperative patients, e.g. patients who do not want to eat, take baths or get out of bed. They speak with patients to determine the reason for their behaviour and try to get them to co-operate. They seek the assistance of co-workers and supervisors as required. (2)
- Deal with patients' families and friends who disagree with how patients are cared for. They listen to these concerns and either try to find solutions themselves or inform their supervisors. (2)
- Make decisions about the order of tasks, such as which patients to bathe and feed first, using the patients' needs and time preferences as guides. (2)
- Assess and prioritize each assigned task to decide which tasks need immediate attention. (2)
- Locate information about the status of patients by speaking with them, referring to their charts and files, and talking to supervisors and co-workers. (2)
- Decide whether patients are well enough to get out of bed for meals and activities, taking into consideration many aspects of their mental and physical health. (2)
- May assess conditions to determine if patients are improving, deteriorating or stabilizing by monitoring vital signs, such as blood pressure, temperature, and heart and pulse rates. (2)
- May assess patients' functioning using a variety of tests, such as the Functional Motor Skills Inventory. (2)
- Decide when to notify nurses of changes in patients' conditions. (2)
- Learn about patient treatment plans by reading patient files and charts and by speaking with co-workers, supervisors and other healthcare professionals. (2)



Thinking

- Encounter verbally and physically aggressive patients. They speak with patients about their behaviours and seek the assistance of co-workers and supervisors as required. (3)
- May have problems communicating with patients due to language barriers, patient disabilities and medical conditions, such as strokes. They use gestures and visual cues to communicate. (3)
- Deal with patients whose medical conditions deteriorate suddenly and unexpectedly. They follow specific protocols established for emergency situations. (3)



Digital Technology

- May use spreadsheets to record numerical information, such as patients' vital signs. (1)
- May operate hand-held scanners to determine vital signs, such as temperature, blood pressure and glucose levels. (1)
- May use basic features of word processing software to create letters, memos and reports and enter comments in patients' files using pre-set formats. (2)
- May use databases to retrieve and update patient information, e.g. use databases to enter data and search patient records for information about test results, treatments and medical conditions. (2)
- May use intranets and email applications to exchange information and documents with co-workers and supervisors. (2)
- May use browsers and search engines to locate information on specific diseases and medical conditions, medications and recommended treatment plans. (2)
- May use the Internet to access training courses and seminars offered by suppliers, employers and trainers. (2)



Additional Information

Other Essential Skills:

Working with Others

Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates mainly work independently. They work with partners when performing specific tasks that require assistance, such as moving patients from beds to wheelchairs and into bathtubs. They are members of health-care teams that also include registered nurses and other health-care professionals.

Continuous Learning

Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates learn about new products and health-care procedures. Some attend hospital seminars on topics, such as first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Some attend meetings to learn more about diseases, such as Alzheimer's and Huntington's. Some receive training on new equipment, such as wheelchairs and mechanical patient-lifts and beds. Workers also receive fire drill training.

Impact of Digital Technology



All Essential Skills are affected by the introduction of technology in the workplace. Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates' ability to adapt to new technologies is strongly related to their skill levels across Essential Skills, including reading, writing, thinking and communication skills. Technologies are transforming the ways in which workers obtain, process and communicate information, and the types of skills needed to perform in their jobs. In particular, nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates require specific skills to operate specialized software and electronic equipment, now common in some workplaces. They also need computer skills to access information in databases and over the Internet, and to communicate with co-workers and supervisors. For example, they may use databases to enter data and search patient records for information on test results, treatments and medical conditions; or use browsers and search engines to locate information on specific diseases, medical conditions, medications and recommended treatment plans.

Technology in the workplace further affects the complexity of tasks related to the Essential Skills required for this occupation. For example, the use of assembly drawings to learn how to assemble motion equipment used by patients is made more complex by the sophistication of the equipment. At the same time, the use of electronic databases and keyword search functions makes it easier to locate data, such as previously measured weights and blood pressures. Tasks done manually, such as entering dates, times and amounts into patient charts; measuring temperatures, blood pressure or glucose levels; or establishing heart rates, can be completed with speed and accuracy using digital equipment (e.g. hand-held scanners or electronic monitors).



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