



# Skills Builder

## UNIVERSAL FRAMEWORK 2.0

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Impact organisations toolkit



# Introducing Universal Framework 2.0



Skills Builder Partnership works with organisations and individuals across the world to ensure that one day, everyone builds the essential skills to thrive.

Universal Framework 2.0 (UF2.0) is a transformational tool for impact organisations and individuals to measure and build essential skills.

UF2.0 builds off the work of more than 900 organisations in twenty countries to create a shared language and model for building essential skills that can be used by organisations anywhere.

It can be effectively used in a diverse range of settings. Current Skills Builder partners include youth programmes, volunteering partners, businesses, arts and culture organisations, sports clubs, NGOs focused on refugees, inclusion organisations and many more.

We focus on the eight essential skills that enable success in the education, work, and life:

**Communication**

Listening Speaking

**Creative Problem Solving**

Problem Solving Creativity

**Self-Management**

Adapting Planning

**Collaboration**

Leadership Teamwork

This toolkit is designed to introduce UF2.0 ahead of its full launch in July 2025.

If you are not currently a partner, you can find out more about our programmes, tools and support through our website at [www.skillsbuilder.org](http://www.skillsbuilder.org)

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 **Tom Ravenscroft**  
Founder & CEO, Skills Builder Partnership

# Getting started

*Universal Framework 2.0* breaks each of the **eight essential skills** down into **16 steps**, spanning from an absolute beginner through to mastery.

It can be used by impact organisations to achieve three goals:



**Align with partners:** The Universal Framework is used across more than **900 organisations** including charities, social enterprises, education institutions and businesses. This **shared language** allows greater collaboration and supports the adoption of aligned programmes.



**Accelerate skill acquisition:** The Universal Framework can help to accelerate essential skills acquisition through your programmes by **breaking those skills down into teachable steps** – supporting building them directly and deliberate practice.



**Measure impact:** The Universal Framework can also be used as an **assessment or impact** framework, allowing organisations to track **measurable and quantifiable improvements** in their participants' essential skills over time.

You can find lots of examples of approved programmes from organisations who have successfully adopted the Universal Framework at [www.skillsbuilder.org/impact-directory](http://www.skillsbuilder.org/impact-directory)

# Universal Framework 2.0: Overview

## Getting started

## Intermediate

Essential Skills		Getting started								Intermediate							
		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8
Communication	 LISTENING	Focusing	Recalling	Checking	Retelling	Recognising purpose	Note-taking	Active listening	Questioning	Sharing clearly	Discussing together	Meeting others	Organising thoughts	Knowing the audience	Choosing language	Expressing self	Using facts
	 SPEAKING	Sharing clearly	Discussing together	Meeting others	Organising thoughts	Knowing the audience	Choosing language	Expressing self	Using facts	Following instructions	Seeking support	Sharing problems	Finding information	Creating options	Analysing options	Evaluating options	Researching
Creative problem-solving	 PROBLEM SOLVING	Following instructions	Seeking support	Sharing problems	Finding information	Creating options	Analysing options	Evaluating options	Researching	Imagining	Sharing imagination	Expressing imagination	Generating ideas	Suggesting improvements	Combining concepts	Identifying opportunities	Defining success
	 CREATIVITY	Imagining	Sharing imagination	Expressing imagination	Generating ideas	Suggesting improvements	Combining concepts	Identifying opportunities	Defining success	Identifying emotions	Recognising emotions	Persisting	Managing reactions	Reflective learning	Supporting others	Encouraging others	Managing wellbeing
Self-management	 ADAPTING	Identifying emotions	Recognising emotions	Persisting	Managing reactions	Reflective learning	Supporting others	Encouraging others	Managing wellbeing	Sensing difficulty	Identifying successes	Working carefully	Recognising strengths	Facing challenges	Setting goals	Thinking ahead	Prioritising
	 PLANNING	Sensing difficulty	Identifying successes	Working carefully	Recognising strengths	Facing challenges	Setting goals	Thinking ahead	Prioritising	Understanding reactions	Sharing reactions	Recognising reactions	Organising tasks	Managing resources	Mentoring	Self-awareness	Evaluating others
Collaboration	 LEADERSHIP	Understanding reactions	Sharing reactions	Recognising reactions	Organising tasks	Managing resources	Mentoring	Self-awareness	Evaluating others	Working together	Adjusting behaviour	Time keeping	Taking responsibility	Supporting others	Being accountable	Contributing	Valuing others
	 TEAMWORK	Working together	Adjusting behaviour	Time keeping	Taking responsibility	Supporting others	Being accountable	Contributing	Valuing others								

# Universal Framework 2.0: Overview

		Advanced				Mastery				
Essential Skills	Communication		<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Step 12</b>	<b>Step 13</b>	<b>Step 14</b>	<b>Step 15</b>	<b>Step 16</b>
			Summarising	Recognising tone	Identifying influence	Comparing views	Analysing views	Investigating bias	Strategic questioning	Evaluating perspectives
			<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Step 12</b>	<b>Step 13</b>	<b>Step 14</b>	<b>Step 15</b>	<b>Step 16</b>
		Sharing visuals	Communicating sensitively	Speaking engagingly	Adaptive communicating	Negotiating	Constructive communicating	Presenting	Inspiring others	
	Creative problem-solving		<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Step 12</b>	<b>Step 13</b>	<b>Step 14</b>	<b>Step 15</b>	<b>Step 16</b>
			Exploring causation	Recognising patterns	Systems thinking	Logical reasoning	Hypothesis testing	Strategic planning	Evaluating approaches	Continual learning
			<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Step 12</b>	<b>Step 13</b>	<b>Step 14</b>	<b>Step 15</b>	<b>Step 16</b>
		Flexible thinking	Reflecting critically	Seeking perspectives	Prototyping	Incubating ideas	Using curiosity	Facilitating creativity	Championing creativity	
	Self-management		<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Step 12</b>	<b>Step 13</b>	<b>Step 14</b>	<b>Step 15</b>	<b>Step 16</b>
			Balancing workload	Improving performance	Practising resilience	Supporting resilience	Adapting plans	Identifying risks	Managing risk	Being enterprising
			<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Step 12</b>	<b>Step 13</b>	<b>Step 14</b>	<b>Step 15</b>	<b>Step 16</b>
		Resourcing	Involving others	Using skills	Target setting	Seeking feedback	Project planning	Adaptive planning	Agile planning	
Collaboration		<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Step 12</b>	<b>Step 13</b>	<b>Step 14</b>	<b>Step 15</b>	<b>Step 16</b>	
		Allocating roles	Facilitating discussions	Managing disagreements	Coaching	Motivating others	Emotional intelligence	Leading thoughtfully	Leading adaptively	
		<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Step 11</b>	<b>Step 12</b>	<b>Step 13</b>	<b>Step 14</b>	<b>Step 15</b>	<b>Step 16</b>	
	Being inclusive	Being diplomatic	Resolving conflicts	Networking	Reflecting collectively	Learning collectively	Developing others	Improving culture		



# Listening

## Receiving, retaining and processing information

This skill is about how we receive information – whether from a peer, a leader, or someone else.

**Getting started:** Initially, individuals reliably receive information by maintaining adequate focus, recalling simple instructions, checking they understand, and passing on information accurately.

**Intermediate:** Next, individuals listen actively, recognising communication’s purpose, making notes, demonstrating their engagement, and using open questions.

**Advanced:** Then, individuals become critical consumers of information by summarising, recognising tone and influencing techniques, and comparing perspectives.

**Mastery:** Finally, individuals explore why different perspectives come about, investigating biases, challenge and probe different views, and integrate and evaluate them.

*Inclusive practice: The definition of listening can be expanded to other ways of receiving information. The order of skill steps is based on data and the best training approach but individuals may not always secure those steps in sequence.*

Getting started	Step 1	<b>Focusing</b> I can listen for at least a short time
	Step 2	<b>Recalling</b> I remember simple instructions
	Step 3	<b>Checking</b> I ask questions if I don't understand
	Step 4	<b>Retelling</b> I pass on information accurately
Intermediate	Step 5	<b>Recognising purpose</b> I know why someone is communicating with me
	Step 6	<b>Note-taking</b> I record important information
	Step 7	<b>Active listening</b> I show I am paying attention
Advanced	Step 8	<b>Questioning</b> I ask open questions to understand more
	Step 9	<b>Summarising</b> I rephrase or summarise what I learnt
	Step 10	<b>Recognising tone</b> I recognise tone of communication
	Step 11	<b>Identifying influence</b> I recognise when someone is trying to influence me
Mastery	Step 12	<b>Comparing views</b> I compare different points of view
	Step 13	<b>Analysing views</b> I explore why different views might come about
	Step 14	<b>Investigating bias</b> I analyse where bias is shown
	Step 15	<b>Strategic questioning</b> I use questions to challenge perspectives
	Step 16	<b>Evaluating perspectives</b> I objectively evaluate and integrate different perspectives



# Speaking

## Transmitting information or ideas

This skill is about how individuals transmit information and ideas – whether to peers, leaders, or others.

**Getting started:** Initially, individuals communicate clearly with individuals they know, in small groups, and then with new people while organising points to be understood.

**Intermediate:** Next, individuals communicate effectively by thinking about what their audience already know, choosing appropriate language, tone, expression and gesture, and bringing in facts appropriately.

**Advanced:** Then, individuals become more adaptable communicators by bringing in visual aids, managing sensitive topics, and being engaging and adaptive.

**Mastery:** Finally, individuals can negotiate effectively, maintain communication in difficult situations, present complex ideas and share a vision.

*Inclusive practice: The definition of speaking can be expanded to other ways of transmitting information. The order of skill steps is based on data and the best training approach but individuals may not always secure those steps in sequence.*

Getting started	Step 1	<b>Sharing clearly</b> I communicate clearly with someone I know
	Step 2	<b>Discussing together</b> I communicate clearly in a small group
	Step 3	<b>Meeting others</b> I communicate with new people when I need to
	Step 4	<b>Organising thoughts</b> I order my points to be understood
Intermediate	Step 5	<b>Knowing the audience</b> I adapt my communication to what my audience already know
	Step 6	<b>Choosing language</b> I choose appropriate language for the situation
	Step 7	<b>Expressing self</b> I use tone, expression and gesture to be understood
Advanced	Step 8	<b>Using facts</b> I use facts and examples to support my communication
	Step 9	<b>Sharing visuals</b> I use images, charts or diagrams when it helps my communication
	Step 10	<b>Communicating sensitively</b> I talk about difficult or sensitive topics effectively
	Step 11	<b>Speaking engagingly</b> I communicate in a way that is engaging for my audience
Mastery	Step 12	<b>Adaptive communicating</b> I adapt my communication depending on audience reactions
	Step 13	<b>Negotiating</b> I manage discussions effectively to reach an agreement
	Step 14	<b>Constructive communicating</b> I maintain clear and constructive communication in challenging situations
	Step 15	<b>Presenting</b> I present to an audience when required
	Step 16	<b>Inspiring others</b> I communicate a vision persuasively



# Problem Solving

## Finding solutions to challenges

This skill is about how individuals effectively solve problems, recognising that while knowledge and technical skills are vital, there are also transferable techniques between settings.

**Getting started:** Initially, individuals solve simple problems by following instructions, seeking support and sharing what the problem is, or finding information themselves.

**Intermediate:** Next, individuals explore complicated problems by creating multiple potential solutions, analysing them, using success criteria for evaluation, and bringing in extra research effectively.

**Advanced:** Then, individuals investigate complex problems by exploring causation, recognising patterns and principles, thinking about parts of a system, and reasoning logically.

**Mastery:** Finally, individuals tackle complex problems by creating and testing hypotheses, and then creating, implementing and refining strategic plans.

*Inclusive practice: The order of skill steps is based on data and the best training approach but individuals may not always secure those steps in sequence.*

Getting started	Step 1	<b>Following instructions</b> I follow instructions
	Step 2	<b>Seeking support</b> I find help from someone if needed
	Step 3	<b>Sharing problems</b> I describe problems to others
	Step 4	<b>Finding information</b> I find information to complete a task
Intermediate	Step 5	<b>Creating options</b> I create different possible solutions to a problem
	Step 6	<b>Analysing options</b> I identify advantages and disadvantages of potential solutions
	Step 7	<b>Evaluating options</b> I choose between possible solutions based on success criteria
Advanced	Step 8	<b>Researching</b> I research to build my understanding
	Step 9	<b>Exploring causation</b> I analyse causes and effects
	Step 10	<b>Recognising patterns</b> I identify patterns to gain insight
	Step 11	<b>Systems thinking</b> I identify how parts of a system impact each other
Mastery	Step 12	<b>Logical reasoning</b> I use logical reasoning to structure problems
	Step 13	<b>Hypothesis testing</b> I structure ideas so that I can test them
	Step 14	<b>Strategic planning</b> I develop strategic plans to address complex problems
	Step 15	<b>Evaluating approaches</b> I evaluate the success of strategic plans
	Step 16	<b>Continual learning</b> I improve strategic plans based on new insights



# Creativity

## Using imagination and generating new ideas

This skill is about how individuals expansively create new ideas and possibilities in a wide range of settings and is the complement to problem solving.

**Getting started:** Initially, individuals use their imagination to imagine different possibilities, share and express them, and create ideas when given a simple prompt.

**Intermediate:** Next, individuals apply their creativity to suggest improvements, combine concepts, identify opportunities for innovation, and develop success criteria.

**Advanced:** Then, individuals explore creative thinking more deeply by challenging their own assumptions, reflecting critically, seeking perspectives, and prototyping ideas to develop them further.

**Mastery:** Finally, individuals drive creativity more widely by incubating ideas, curiously seeking out new ideas and opportunities, and facilitating and championing creativity and innovation more widely.

*Inclusive practice: The order of skill steps is based on data and the best training approach but individuals may not always secure those steps in sequence.*

Getting started	Step 1	<b>Imagining</b> I imagine different things
	Step 2	<b>Sharing imagination</b> I share what I imagine with someone
	Step 3	<b>Expressing imagination</b> I share what I imagine in different ways
	Step 4	<b>Generating ideas</b> I create ideas to solve a problem
Intermediate	Step 5	<b>Suggesting improvements</b> I create ideas to make something better
	Step 6	<b>Combining concepts</b> I can combine ideas to make new ones
	Step 7	<b>Identifying opportunities</b> I identify opportunities for innovation
Advanced	Step 8	<b>Defining success</b> I set out success criteria for creating new ideas
	Step 9	<b>Flexible thinking</b> I challenge my assumptions about ideas
	Step 10	<b>Reflecting critically</b> I question my own ideas to improve them
	Step 11	<b>Seeking perspectives</b> I seek different perspectives to develop my ideas
	Step 12	<b>Prototyping</b> I create quick tests of an idea
Mastery	Step 13	<b>Incubating ideas</b> I give ideas time and attention to evolve
	Step 14	<b>Using curiosity</b> I seek new concepts and ideas to innovate from
	Step 15	<b>Facilitating creativity</b> I share creative tools for collective innovation
	Step 16	<b>Championing creativity</b> I nurture cultures of creativity and innovation



# Adapting

## Overcoming challenges and setbacks to achieve goals

This skill is about how individuals adapt to challenges and setbacks effectively whether in education, the workplace or in their wider lives.

**Getting started:** Initially, individuals identify their own emotional responses and those of others, showing persistence and managing their immediate reactions to setbacks.

**Intermediate:** Next, individuals demonstrate a positive approach to challenges, reflecting and learning from them, supporting and encouraging others, and proactively managing their own wellbeing.

**Advanced:** Then, individuals build their resilience by balancing their workload, proactively improving their performance, and practising and supporting others to spot opportunities in challenges.

**Mastery:** Finally, individuals apply their adaptability by adapting plans, identifying and managing risks, and seizing the opportunities in challenges and setbacks.

*Inclusive practice: The order of skill steps is based on data and the best training approach but individuals may not always secure those steps in sequence.*

Getting started	Step 1	<b>Identifying emotions</b> I can tell how I am feeling
	Step 2	<b>Recognising emotions</b> I can tell how others are feeling
	Step 3	<b>Persisting</b> I keep going when faced with challenges
	Step 4	<b>Managing reactions</b> I respond calmly when faced with challenges
Intermediate	Step 5	<b>Reflective learning</b> I reflect and learn from challenges
	Step 6	<b>Supporting others</b> I help others face challenges
	Step 7	<b>Encouraging others</b> I encourage others to keep going
Advanced	Step 8	<b>Managing wellbeing</b> I have routines to manage my wellbeing
	Step 9	<b>Balancing workload</b> I manage my workload effectively
	Step 10	<b>Improving performance</b> I seek opportunities to grow my experience and expertise
	Step 11	<b>Practising resilience</b> I look for opportunities when faced with challenges
	Step 12	<b>Supporting resilience</b> I help others see opportunities when faced with challenges
Mastery	Step 13	<b>Adapting plans</b> I change plans to work through setbacks
	Step 14	<b>Identifying risks</b> I identify potential risks and gains
	Step 15	<b>Managing risk</b> I actively manage risks
	Step 16	<b>Being enterprising</b> I capitalise on opportunities



# Planning

## Setting goals and designing routes to achieve them

This skill is about how individuals develop clear, tangible goals and robust routes to achieving them – whether in education, the workplace or their wider lives.

**Getting started:** Initially, individuals assess the difficulty of tasks, knowing what doing well looks like for them, working with care, and recognising their strengths.

**Intermediate:** Next, individuals take a positive approach to new challenges, setting achievable goals, developing simple plans, and prioritising tasks.

**Advanced:** Then, individuals implement more complex plans by securing resources, engaging others behind the goal, developing the skills required, and setting targets to measure success.

**Mastery:** Finally, individuals develop sophisticated plans by seeking feedback, using project planning tools, adapting plans using data, and planning in an agile way.

*Inclusive practice: The order of skill steps is based on data and the best training approach but individuals may not always secure those steps in sequence.*

Getting started	Step 1	<b>Sensing difficulty</b> I know when something is too difficult
	Step 2	<b>Identifying successes</b> I know what doing well looks like for me
	Step 3	<b>Working carefully</b> I work with care and attention
	Step 4	<b>Recognising strengths</b> I recognise what I am good at
Intermediate	Step 5	<b>Facing challenges</b> I take a positive approach to new challenges
	Step 6	<b>Setting goals</b> I set achievable goals for myself
	Step 7	<b>Thinking ahead</b> I think about routes to achieve a goal
Advanced	Step 8	<b>Prioritising</b> I order and prioritise tasks to achieve goals
	Step 9	<b>Resourcing</b> I secure the resources I need to achieve goals
	Step 10	<b>Involving others</b> I engage others to achieve goals
	Step 11	<b>Using skills</b> I plan how to use and build my skills to achieve goals
	Step 12	<b>Target setting</b> I create plans with clear targets to measure success
Mastery	Step 13	<b>Seeking feedback</b> I seek out a range of views to improve plans
	Step 14	<b>Project planning</b> I use planning tools to organise complex projects
	Step 15	<b>Adaptive planning</b> I use data to evaluate progress and make adaptations
	Step 16	<b>Agile planning</b> I work flexibly and responsively to improve my plans



# Leadership

Supporting, encouraging and motivating others to achieve a shared goal

This skill is about how individuals make things happen in education, the workplace and wider lives, whether or not they have a formal leadership position.

**Getting started:** Initially, individuals understand their own responses to ideas, sharing those effectively, recognising others' reactions, and allocating tasks reasonably.

**Intermediate:** Next, individuals start leading others by managing time and resources to complete tasks, recognising strengths and weaknesses of themselves and others, and using this insight to allocate roles.

**Advanced:** Then, individuals use a collaborative leadership approach by facilitating discussions, managing disagreements, and using mentoring and coaching techniques.

**Mastery:** Finally, individuals demonstrate strong leadership by effectively motivating others, applying emotional intelligence, and thinking about and adapting their leadership style.

*Inclusive practice: The order of skill steps is based on data and the best training approach but individuals may not always secure those steps in sequence.*

Getting started	Step 1	<b>Understanding reactions</b> I know how an idea makes me feel
	Step 2	<b>Sharing reactions</b> I explain how an idea makes me feel when appropriate
	Step 3	<b>Recognising reactions</b> I know when others have strong feelings about something
	Step 4	<b>Organising tasks</b> I divide up tasks in a fair way
Intermediate	Step 5	<b>Managing resources</b> I manage team time and resources to complete tasks
	Step 6	<b>Mentoring</b> I use my experience to support others
	Step 7	<b>Self-awareness</b> I recognise how others see my strengths and weaknesses
Advanced	Step 8	<b>Evaluating others</b> I identify others' strengths and weaknesses
	Step 9	<b>Allocating roles</b> I allocate roles based on strengths and weaknesses
	Step 10	<b>Facilitating discussions</b> I structure group discussions
	Step 11	<b>Managing disagreements</b> I support shared decision making
	Step 12	<b>Coaching</b> I use structured questioning to help others
Mastery	Step 13	<b>Motivating others</b> I use a range of approaches to motivate others
	Step 14	<b>Emotional intelligence</b> I respond to others' emotions to lead effectively
	Step 15	<b>Leading thoughtfully</b> I recognise my leadership style and its impact on others
	Step 16	<b>Leading adaptively</b> I adapt my leadership style to the situation



# Teamwork

Working cooperatively with others to achieve a shared goal

This skill is about how individuals work with others and collaborate effectively whether in education, the workplace, or in their wider lives.

**Getting started:** Initially, individuals show they can work with others, behaving appropriately for the setting, keeping time reliably and taking responsibility for simple tasks.

**Intermediate:** Next, individuals contribute to teams by supporting others, being accountable for their goals, contributing to group activities, and valuing others' contributions.

**Advanced:** Then, individuals make teams more effective by being inclusive, being diplomatic, resolving conflicts, and building networks.

**Mastery:** Finally, individuals drive team performance by reflecting and suggesting improvements, supporting collective learning, developing their peers, and improving the team's culture.

*Inclusive practice: The order of skill steps is based on data and the best training approach but individuals may not always secure those steps in sequence.*

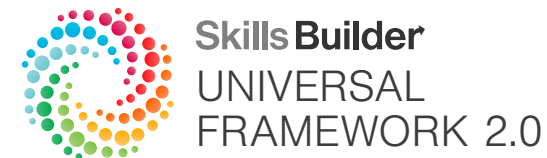
Getting started	Step 1	<b>Working together</b> I work with others when appropriate
	Step 2	<b>Adjusting behaviour</b> I behave in a way that fits the setting
	Step 3	<b>Time keeping</b> I keep to time reliably
	Step 4	<b>Taking responsibility</b> I take responsibility for completing tasks
Intermediate	Step 5	<b>Supporting others</b> I help others as much as I can
	Step 6	<b>Being accountable</b> I am accountable for my goals
	Step 7	<b>Contributing</b> I contribute to group activity
Advanced	Step 8	<b>Valuing others</b> I recognise the value of others' ideas
	Step 9	<b>Being inclusive</b> I support others to thrive in a group
	Step 10	<b>Being diplomatic</b> I avoid creating unhelpful conflicts
	Step 11	<b>Resolving conflicts</b> I work collaboratively to resolve unhelpful conflicts
Mastery	Step 12	<b>Networking</b> I build helpful relationships beyond my team
	Step 13	<b>Reflecting collectively</b> I reflect on progress and suggest improvements
	Step 14	<b>Learning collectively</b> I evaluate successes and failures and share lessons
	Step 15	<b>Developing others</b> I support my peers to develop
	Step 16	<b>Improving culture</b> I improve the team culture



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