



# Adding it all up

## Numeracy truly is an everyday skill to have

By MICHAEL BERGER  
For the Report

The 3 R's you learned in grade school—Readin', Ritin', and 'Rithmetic. Algebra in middle school. Trigonometry or Calculus in high school or university. There are many reasons people may not like numbers. Numbers are integral to the workplace however. It doesn't matter if you're a cashier, an office manager, someone in the trades, or a scientist. Virtually every job requires you to use numbers to some degree. One definition of numeracy is "a competence in the mathematical skills needed to cope with everyday life and an understanding of information presented mathematically, e.g. in graphs, charts or tables." It's interesting that the definition uses the words "cope with everyday life" in their definition. Numeracy truly is an everyday skill to have.

Many components make up numeracy. The two main ones are numerical estimation and numerical calculation. Within numerical calculation, there

are sub-components of money math, scheduling/budgeting & accounting math; measurement & calculation math, and data analysis math.

What makes up each sub-component? What sorts of tasks are done with each type of math? Money math is the math used to do financial transactions. money math is used to total bills, make change, use a cash register, calculate discounts, calculate interest payments, prepare pay cheques, or forecast prices or trends.

Scheduling/budgeting and accounting math is used for tasks such as creating employee schedules, making entries into financial records, recording costs against budget, planning budgets for short-term projects and auditing financial records for accuracy. Measurement and calculation math is used when measuring quantities, weight or distance, converting to metric from imperial, measuring ingredients, making scale drawings, or calculating the square footage of a room.

Data analysis math is the final sub-component of numeracy. It's used to

make simple comparisons, calculate basic summary information such as totals, averages, or percentages, test hypothesis and make projections.

Numeracy truly is a part of virtually every job function in Canadian society. Interested in seeing how your numeracy skills match up? HRSDC has a numeracy indicator guide for employers available on their website at: [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential\\_skills/numeracy\\_indicator.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/numeracy_indicator.shtml).

Need help with your numeracy skills? As part of the Workplace Essential Skills project in Chilliwack, we're looking to help people by offering free training and support in improving all workplace essential skills. One of our goals with the Chilliwack WES project is to provide a network of businesses interested WES training for employees. If that sounds like you or your business, give me a call.

For more information on this topic, or to become involved in the WES project, please call me at 604-795-0025 x2434 or e-mail [michaelb@chilliwacklearning.com](mailto:michaelb@chilliwacklearning.com). HRSDC has provided funding for the WES project in Chilliwack.

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