**ICT Skills Information Sheet**

<https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/application-advice/job-applications/what-are-ict-skills>, Last Updated: 17 October 2019

**ICT** (or Information and Communication Technology) refers to the use of technology for communication and to process information.

**What Is ICT?**

ICT is formed of several different components, including:

* **Hardware** – computers, printers and other physical technology devices
* **Software** – operating systems and programs installed on ICT hardware devices. These are used to create files such as spreadsheets, databases, presentations and text-based documents
* **Communication systems** – telephone lines and wireless signals, which enable connections with other ICT users and the internet
* **Online data sharing platforms** – for example, using a video-calling application such as Skype or sharing files on a cloud-based system

Efficient use of ICT systems can help to streamline business processes. This can lead to more effective use of time and resources.

**What Are ICT Skills?**

The term ‘ICT skills’ describes the abilities required to effectively use the ICT components listed above.

For example:

* The ability to switch on a computer, log in and connect to the appropriate platforms and programs
* Using ICT hardware to scan, print and copy documents
* Using a digital camera to capture photographs or video footage
* Editing images using computer software (like Adobe Photoshop)
* Using popular software packages, such as Microsoft Office, to create, edit and save documents
* Using a search engine (such as Google or Bing) to find information
* Browsing and posting on social media accounts (such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn)
* Using computers and the internet safely, for example, keeping personal information private, and avoiding viruses, identity theft and other online threats
* Working knowledge of the languages used in coding and programming, such as HTML, CSS and JavaScript
* Sending and receiving information using data-sharing applications and cloud storage systems, for example Google Drive or Dropbox

**Why Are ICT Skills Important?**

ICT usage is becoming increasingly prevalent in day-to-day life, as people become progressively dependent on their digital devices. In 2018, [78% of UK adults owned a smartphone](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/decade-of-digital-dependency) and 64% of adults described the internet as ‘[an essential part of their life](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/decade-of-digital-dependency)’.

In the workplace, ICT is vital for the smooth running of many everyday tasks and has been adopted for the following reasons:

**ICT Can Help Foster More Efficient Ways of Working**

In the employment sector, ICT enables organisations to **operate more efficiently**, so employing staff with ICT skills is vital to the smooth running of any business. Being able to use ICT systems effectively allows employees more time to concentrate on areas of their job role that require [soft skills](https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/competencies/soft-skills).

For example, many pharmacies use robot technology to assist with picking prescribed drugs. This allows highly trained pharmaceutical staff to focus on jobs requiring human intelligence and interaction, such as dispensing and checking medication.

**ICT Can Help to Improve Customer Relations**

When looking for a new restaurant to try, you will likely spend time looking at websites, reading blogs and checking out recent reviews before you make a booking.

With so much online content and increased levels of competition, businesses are having to work harder to improve the customer’s online journey. They need staff that can implement and use technologies that can help them attract customers.

This could include making the company website more user-friendly, improving the quality of customer support services, or creating a new digital marketing strategy.

**ICT Can Help to Increase Business Profits**

As well as improving customer relations, having a robust presence online can contribute to increased business profits.

Traditional sales methods (such as cold calling) are less commonplace now, with businesses choosing to promote their products through modern methods such as social media influencers, video marketing and podcasts.

**Top Five ICT Skills All Employees Should Have**

Here is a list of the top five ICT skills all employees should have:

1. **Basic Operation of ICT Hardware** – Including printers, scanners, photocopiers, smartphones, tablets and projectors.
2. **Safe Internet Usage** – Such as using search engines for research purposes or updating company social media accounts.
3. **Typing** – The ability to use a word processing program (such as Microsoft Word) to create letters, agendas and minutes. In some roles (such as medical or legal secretarial work), audio transcription skills will be required.
4. **Document Creation** – The ability to use software (such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher or Adobe Creative) to produce professional documents like PowerPoint presentations, letters, leaflets or posters.
5. **Email and Calendar Management** – The ability to use an email solution (such as Microsoft Outlook) to communicate with internal and external contacts, keep calendars up to date, and book meetings. In some specialist ICT roles, employees will need an in-depth knowledge of email systems, to create and manage user accounts.

**Students can learn useful life skills through technology**

By using technology in the classroom, students can develop skills essential for the 21st century. Students can gain the skills they will need to be successful in the future. Modern learning is about collaborating with others, solving complex problems, critical thinking, developing different forms of communication and leadership skills, and improving motivation and productivity. What is more, technology can help develop many practical skills, including creating presentations, learning to differentiate reliable from unreliable sources on the Internet, maintaining proper online etiquette, and writing emails. These are very important skills that can be developed in the classroom.