

**STUDENT GUIDE**

**PREPARING FOR**

**WorkKeys<sup>®</sup>**



**ASSESSMENTS**



Dear Students:

You are about to take part in an exciting state and national initiative called Career Readiness Certification (CRC). CRC is based on scores achieved on WorkKeys assessments. You may earn a Bronze, Silver or Gold CRC depending on your scores on three WorkKeys assessments: Reading for Information, Locating Information, and Applied Math.

WorkKeys assessments are not like other tests, many of which are designed to provide documentation for school use only. WorkKeys is a system developed by ACT to help students develop lifelong-learning skills and better workplace skills, help teachers prepare students for the workplace, and help employers select the most qualified job applicants.

WorkKeys helps you understand your preparedness for specific jobs and careers, **whether you are going on to college or directly into the workforce.** The test questions resemble problems found in the everyday work world.

The practical implication for you is clear – by increasing your foundational employability skill levels while in school, and by obtaining additional education and training as needed after high school, you will have skills that will last a lifetime. You will also place yourself in a better position to seek the career/job you want and to improve your future salary. While education is worthwhile for its own sake, it also has a dollar payoff in the future. Employers value and are willing to pay higher salaries for higher employability skill levels. While higher skills do not guarantee high-paying jobs, they certainly make them more attainable.

Please put your best effort into taking these assessments. Though WorkKeys may be quite different from other tests you've taken, we urge you to view these differences as a new challenge. Take the time to really think about your answers; good results for you depend on your best effort. Whether you are taking WorkKeys assessments as an incoming freshman or as a graduating senior, meet the challenge by doing the very best you can to help yourself, your school, and the students that follow in your footsteps.

We want to ensure that you are prepared for life – for real jobs in the real world. We wish you the best!

## OVERVIEW

CRC is based on three WorkKeys assessments:

*Applied Mathematics*  
*Reading for Information*  
*Locating Information*

These WorkKeys assessments allow you to demonstrate your competence in:

- Communications Skills
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Interpersonal Skills

Your performance will depend upon how well you apply the skills and knowledge you have learned in school and through life and work-related experiences. Your performance on a particular assessment is not measured against the performance of other individuals who take the same assessment but, rather, on your proficiency with respect to the skills covered in each assessment – skills that are required in real jobs. The abilities to learn, communicate, and solve problems – all areas addressed by WorkKeys – are important assets for any individual, regardless of career choice.

Your skill scores provide career guidance and help you make good career choices. Students' scores help educators evaluate curriculum and businesses plan training programs and screen prospective employees.

After you take the WorkKeys assessments, your school will receive the Memo to Examinee score report and the Summary Report:

- Memo to Examinee indicates your skill level for each assessment administered, along with descriptions of tasks associated with each skill level achieved and some strategies you may use to improve performance in that skill.
- Summary Report includes your skill level score and a brief description of the achieved skill level for each assessment administered. The report format makes it suitable to copy and attach to a job application.

*In addition, you will receive your NC Career Readiness Certificate in Bronze (if you have no score lower than 3), Silver (if you have no score lower than 4), or Gold (if you have no score lower than 5). The NC CRC is signed by the Governor of North Carolina, and if you wish you may register your scores on the WorkKeys website [www.myworkkeys.com](http://www.myworkkeys.com) and qualify for a National Career Readiness Certificate with no further testing required.*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is WorkKeys?**

The WorkKeys system from ACT is designed to help you develop life skills and better workplace skills. Better skills mean better paying jobs – in any career field.

The WorkKeys system consists of job profiling (finding out which skills are needed on the job), assessments (the tests you'll be taking plus several others), reporting (telling you how your skills match job requirements), and instructional support (guidance to educators related to improving students' skill levels).

### **Why is WorkKeys important?**

Employers in Wayne County and in many places throughout the US often find that students are not adequately trained for even entry-level jobs. WorkKeys helps businesses and educators work together to ensure that you leave school prepared for real jobs in the real world.

### **What types of skills are needed?**

WorkKeys measures skills that employers believe are critical to job success—skills such as reading, math, listening, locating information, and teamwork. These skills are valuable for any type of profession—skilled or professional—and at any level of education.

### **How does the system work?**

WorkKeys helps you figure out how prepared you are for jobs that interest you and guides you to the education and training you need. The system documents your work skills in key areas, giving you an edge with employers when you apply for jobs.

### **So are these tests designed for only low-level, blue-collar jobs?**

Not at all! WorkKeys has determined the job skills needed for thousands of unique job titles, ranging from accountant to automotive technician and from welder to webmaster. In fact, the fastest growing types of WorkKeys job profiles are being done for professional, technical, and managerial jobs that require at least a bachelor's degree. The abilities to learn, listen, communicate, work in teams, and solve problems—all areas addressed by WorkKeys—are important assets for any employee, regardless of career choice.

### **Why should I care about these tests?**

Since WorkKeys tests are fairly new and aren't the college entrance exam that many high school students focus on, some students don't see the purpose in trying to do their best on them. You need to remember, however, that everyone enters the workforce eventually—whether you get a job right out of high school, work part-time while continuing your education, or go through extensive postsecondary training. WorkKeys stresses skills development important for every type of employment.

### **Why do some of the test questions seem irrelevant to my career choice?**

Since WorkKeys questions relate to a variety of real-life experiences, the situations sometimes deal with work environments that do not interest particular students. Even very difficult exams, such as the Law School Admission Test or the Graduate Record Examination, routinely contain analytical reasoning questions that feature taxi drivers, executives, carpet sellers, professors, bellhops, architects, and numerous other workers. The basic skills needed to solve a legal question, configure a computer, or schedule employee vacations may be similar for all these tests. And while some WorkKeys test questions can be fairly easy, others are quite difficult--to measure the widest possible range of skills.

**Can I study for the tests?**

Since WorkKeys measures applied skills, you can't cram to memorize answers for the tests. However, to gain familiarity with the type of questions that might be asked on the various assessments, you may wish to visit ACT's website. The website includes sample test questions and answers at <http://www.act.org/workkeys/assess/foundational.html>.

Your school also has access to an Internet-based self-paced learning program that you may access to help prepare for the tests, or to help you improve your scores if you wish to re-test at a later date to improve your skill levels. Ask your teacher or counselor about WIN for WorkKeys.

**What happens to the test results?**

You can use your WorkKeys results to get a better picture of jobs you are ready for and to improve areas where your skills are weak. Employers can use the results to determine how qualified you are for positions in their organizations. And schools can use the information—along with input from employers—to ensure that their curriculum provides adequate work skills training to meet the needs of businesses.

**How does the Career Readiness Certificate work?**

Getting a Career Readiness Certificate allows you to show prospective employers that you possess the basic skills they require. Even if you have a high school diploma or a post-secondary degree, the CRC further verifies that you can handle the kinds of tasks – finding information, reading instructions and directions, even working with figures – that are common in today's workplace.

**Why is a Career Readiness Certificate needed?**

In the private sector, there is great concern about the skills gap that exists between those skills required on the job and those exhibited by potential and incumbent workers. Employers experience great difficulty in hiring people who have basic employability skills and who are therefore trainable for specific jobs. The Career Readiness Certificate is a portable skills credential, ensuring employers of a job seeker's skills.

**Why a portable skills credential?**

A portable skills credential that is easily and universally understood and valued by employers, educators, and recipients will facilitate job placement, retention, and advancement in our mobile society. Such a credential would be a supplement to a high school diploma, a GED, post-secondary credential, and/or a college degree. It is a great economic development tool for the workforce and business.

**What can I do with a Career Readiness Certificate?**

Attach a copy of your WorkKeys summary report or add information about your Career Readiness Certificate to your resume and job applications. Or, take your WorkKeys score report or Career Readiness Certificate along with you when you go to a job interview to show the employer that you have the skills needed for the job. If you are planning to attend a community or technical college, include your WorkKeys scores in your application materials. Register your certificate at [MyWorkKeys.com](http://MyWorkKeys.com) so that, when you apply for jobs online, you may give employers your unique web address (URL) where employers can verify your WorkKeys scores.

## TEST-TAKING TIPS

- Bring a calculator to use during the Applied Mathematics assessment.
- Use a #2 pencil, not a mechanical pencil or hard lead pencil.
- Listen to and read the directions for each test carefully.
- Read each question carefully.
- Be sure you understand what each question is asking.
- Budget your time so you will be able to complete the test in the allotted time.
- Answer the easy questions first.
- Use logic in more difficult questions.
- Answer every question because there is no penalty for guessing.
- Review your work.
- Be precise in marking your answer sheet – stay within the circles.
- Erase completely all unintended marks on your answer sheet.
- Scratch work is to be done in the test booklet. (No scratch paper is needed.)

**Reminder: Sample test questions and answers are available on ACT's website – <http://www.act.org/workkeys/assess/foundational.html>.**

## WORKKEYS TEST DESCRIPTIONS FOR CRC

### **Applied Mathematics.** (Paper/45 minutes)

Measures skill in applying mathematical reasoning to work-related problems using methods of calculation that occur in the workplace.

### **Locating Information** (Paper/45 minutes)

Measures skill in using information presented in workplace graphics, such as diagrams, floor plans, tables, forms, graphs, charts, and instrument gauges. Examinees are asked to locate, insert, compare, and summarize information in one or more related graphics.

### **Reading for Information** (Paper/45 minutes)

Measures skill in reading and understanding work-related instructions and policies. Reading passages and questions are based on actual workplace demands and include memos, bulletins, notices, letters, policy manuals, and governmental regulations.