

Tips for developing Job aids

Job Aids are a great tool to support workplace learning and for building Essential Skills. Whether we realize it or not, there are performance supports all around us. Have you ever used a troubleshooting table when equipment is not working, used a GPS to get from point A to point B, or assembled furniture from IKEA? These are all examples of performance supports, and if used at work, job aids.

Job aids provide employees with the information and guidance they require at the **moment of need** in order for them to be productive, accurate, and efficient on the job.

This section provides an overview about job aids and strategies for developing them. You will find:

- What are job aids?
- When are job aids most needed?
- Benefits of using job aids
- Types of job aids and when to use them
- Design tips

a) What is a job aid?

A job aid is a tool or other resource which provides **just the right amount** of task guidance and **support**, at the **moment of need**, as part of work.

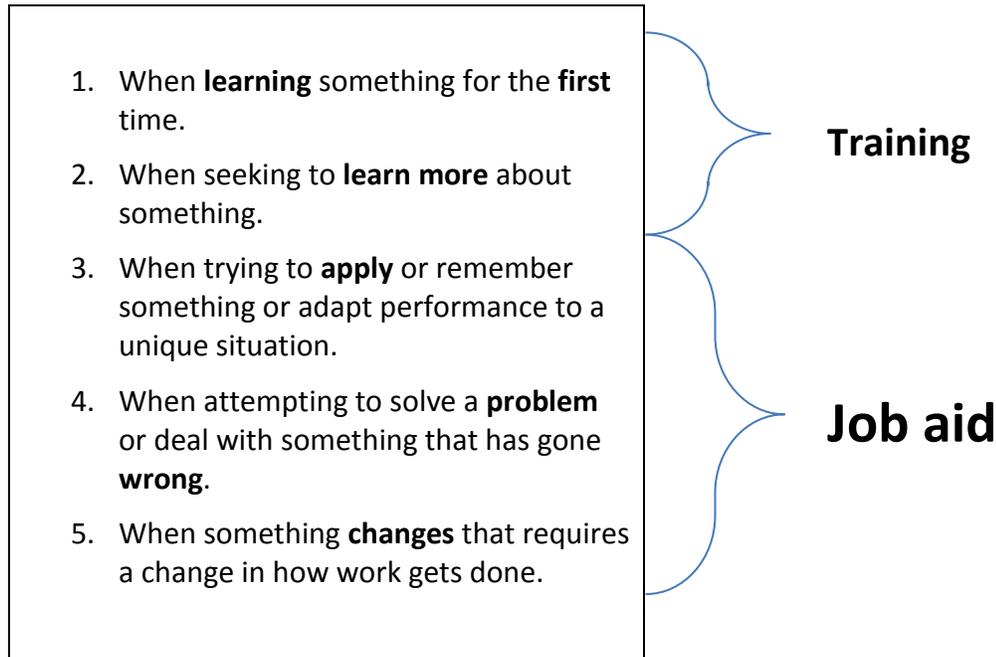
A computer would not be a job aid, but a software application such as a tutorial would be. A hammer would not be a job aid, but a laminated card that advises what type of nail to use for a particular job, would be.

The Moment of Need

Nothing describes a job aid better than the idea of *“the moment of need”*. Done right, a job aid is part of the job itself.

“It simply does not work when we expect employees to transfer training immediately to the workplace. Learning doesn’t stick unless you put in place provisions that support performance in the workflow.” - Employer

b) When are Job Aids most needed?



Many situations are good opportunities for job aids. For example:

- When a task is clear and repetitive, job aids speed up the work and remove opportunity for error.
- When a task is complex, job aids hide some of the complexity, allowing the employee to focus on the most essential aspects of the work.
- When a task requires the application of a process, job aids turn conceptual information into productive outputs.
- When work processes, procedures, and/or outputs significantly change, job aids “coach” users moving from the old to the new way of doing things.
- When you need consistent performance, job aids reduce changes that can cause problems later.
- When you require record keeping, job aids can track activities and generate reports.

There is no doubt that a business has many job aid opportunities; you just have to look around and listen for the cues. They are easier to spot than you think.

c) Benefits of using Job aids

The benefits of job aids include:

- Less retraining/shorter training

- Better performance and productivity levels than could be achieved with training alone
- Faster time to competence
- Lower cost of incompetence
- Reduction of waste, errors, and omissions
- Improved productivity and efficiency
- Customer product and/or service satisfaction
- Employee satisfaction

d) Types of Job Aids and when to use them

A job aid is designed with a specific task in mind. Things to consider when determining the type of job aid:

The work:

- What is typically done to complete the task?
- What is the order of steps, process, or decision making?
- What tools are used to perform the task?
- Are the same steps followed in the same order each time the task is performed?
- Are there times when the task is performed in a different order?

The Employee:

- Keep in mind who will be using the job aid.
- What is the employee's experience level? If the employee is new or has limited experience, you will need to include more detail in the job aid.

Determine the Job Aid Format

- Decide what part of the task is being supported by the job aid.
- Will it provide the step-by-step procedures, guidelines to follow, or reference information?
- Visualize how the job aid will be used and how it should be structured.

What Type of Job Aid Should You Use?		
If...	Then Consider a...	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task consists of steps that must be completed in a specific sequence. • The employees do not need to make decisions regarding the task. • The task or procedure is linear and there is only one path for the user to follow. 	<p>Step-by-Step Job Aid - presents information and directions in a sequence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrated steps for logging into a database • Step-by-step instructions of what to do when an accident or incident occurs • Illustrated steps for calculating load weights and load placement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task consists of steps that must be completed in a specific sequence. • The employee needs to document information to be used to complete the task. • The task requires performing calculations. Information that is used to complete the task will be referenced at a later time. 	<p>Form or Worksheet Job Aid - guides employee through a process and requires recorded responses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document templates to compare against such as sample reports, letters • Format and sample for work or calculations, e.g. sample for calculating load weights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task does not consist of steps that must be completed in a specific sequence. • The task involves inspecting, observing, or planning. • Consistency is an important factor. 	<p>Checklist Job Aid - are groups of items to consider or remember.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items to be completed before an application form is accepted • List of items to inspect before departing • List of completed documents to have on hand before a border crossing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task does not consist of steps that 	<p>Decision Table Job Aid – to help make</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If-then decision table to map out

<p>must be completed in a specific sequence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several conditions or variables may exist. • There are limited options associated with each decision variable. 	<p>decisions based on a set of conditions.</p>	<p>alternative courses of action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Troubleshooting guide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several yes or no decisions that must be made. • The decisions must be made in a specific order. • Completion of the task is dependent on the answer given at each decision point. 	<p>Flow Chart Job Aid - to help complete tasks and make decisions based on a set of conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes/no decision table to map out alternative courses of action • Troubleshooting guide • Process map
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task does not consist of steps that must be completed in a specific sequence. • The task requires reference to data versus performing a process or procedure. 	<p>Reference Source job aid - provide information required for completing a task.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of information such as contact list, telephone books and parts catalogs

e) Design Tips

What makes job aids worth the effort? What is likely to lead to success? These tips will point you in the right direction.

Content

- Include only the necessary steps or information required. Ask yourself if the step or content is relevant to the task at hand.
- Keep the information simple and concise. Present the information in small pieces.
- Write short sentences and use short words to describe or list the steps, processes, calculations, or decisions that need to be made.
- Leave out “nice-to-know” tidbits of information. The job aid should be a quick reference.
- Place critical information in the first and last parts of sentences or sections of the job aid.

Language

- Use common, everyday language. Avoid long, unfamiliar words and jargon unless appropriate to the task and employee.
- Use verbs and action words at the beginning of sentences wherever possible.

Visual Elements

- Use clear and simple drawings, graphics, diagrams and pictures to clarify information or provide more detail than words would allow.
- Be consistent in the type of visual that is used. If you use a drawing in one step, use one in any subsequent steps.