

What are 21st century skills?

The 21st century skills are a set of abilities that students need to develop in order to succeed in the information age. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills lists three types:

Learning Skills

Critical Thinking
Creative Thinking
Collaborating
Communicating

Literacy Skills

Information Literacy
Media Literacy
Technology Literacy

Life Skills

Flexibility
Initiative
Social Skills
Productivity
Leadership

New Skills for New Jobs

These skills have always been important for students, though they are particularly important in our information-based economy. When most workers held jobs in industry, the key skills were knowing a trade, following directions, getting along with others, working hard, and being professional—efficient, prompt, honest, and fair. Schools have done an excellent job of teaching these skills, and students still need them.

To hold information-age jobs, though, students also need to think deeply about issues, solve problems creatively, work in teams, communicate clearly in many media, learn ever-changing technologies, and deal with a flood of information. The rapid changes in our world require students to be flexible, to take the initiative and lead when necessary, and to produce something new and useful.