Manchester Adult Education

Why digital skills are now so important - What you need to get ahead

Over the last decade, technology's rapid development has led to our learning - with some learning at different rates than others. The expanding world of digital has opened up entirely new job titles and places in the market, as well as integrating itself into almost every sector.

Many entry level jobs now require familiarity with some form of software, with the requirement for digital literacy of any level now at an all time high. At a time like this, it's easy to feel as though you've fallen behind and can never catch up - but that is definitely not the case.

With new developments in tech so frequent, it's important to remember that everyone is learning. No one currently in a Microsoft engineering job, or in online programming was born with the knowledge and likely didn't learn it in their school years either. So why halt your learning now? Digital skills can only be developed through learning, and breaking down barriers of embarrassment or fear are key to familiarising yourself with the field and to finally feeling more confident in your computer literacy, both in the workplace and amongst family/peers. Through training with useful courses, you can improve in all key areas to help push you into the digital age.

"Digital skills" are defined in a number of ways: most often as the ability to find, evaluate, use, share, and create content using digital devices (e.g. computers, smartphones). The world of digital is not something to think of as limited to software developers or people high up in tech, or even simply those younger than you. Society has accepted tech and the world of digital is inescapable, and this is a good thing! Digital affecting all aspects of our lives isn't something to fear, it's hugely convenient and improves connectivity and efficiency for all of us. Employers are following this trend, and now no longer expect digital literacy as a desirable, but instead often class it as essential.

A 2021 projection was that 54% of all employees will need significant digital reskilling. Supermarkets now use an in-store software system and all employees are expected to be familiar with it; the same is true for many warehouse workers. Much of the farming industry has adopted digital systems to track data, and food delivery apps require restaurant employees to have knowledge of their interface. Close to every single job on the market will require some level of computer/digital literacy, so learning how to improve one's own skills should be a priority. You aren't alone in your learning, but you would be falling behind if you neglected it entirely.

It goes without saying that strong digital skills can protect you online. Being online poses a number of slight risks, especially if you don't know what you're doing. Imagine living in a house with no awareness of how people could ever break in - it would be quite the challenge to protect yourself and to feel protected. Overcoming this is simply a matter of improving your digital skills and feeling confident online. Using the internet safely requires you to learn new information in order to keep you or your family and friends risk-free and much less vulnerable.

So what skills do you really need?

☑ Email communication

☑ Ability to research online

☑ Use of online calendars, software systems like Microsoft word/excel

☑ Safe use of cloud collaboration based systems, such as Microsoft Teams, Dropbox, Google Drive (especially post-COVID!)

And these are really the core starting point many jobs will simply hold as an expectation, and many are required to ensure your own individual protection online. One of the largest factors in learning how to improve your digital skills is in the confidence you have. Confidence in learning, and feeling assured that you have a strong enough awareness of digital formats will ensure a much higher likelihood of only further improving your skills and safety online.

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Learning these skills, and many more, doesn't have to be a confusing and frustrating struggle of scrolling through articles or feeling embarrassed when calling on family
or friends to help. Digital skills courses are available for you to learn in a variety of ways to best suit your own needs. This includes factoring in your existing level of knowledge to ensure you're not thrown in the deep end, but equally that you aren't being retaught knowledge you already have. It also means working around the timetable you have, as many of you may feel restricted by existing work and jobs, as well as family responsibilities and parenting, so many courses have a variety of options that can suit these needs.

It also means working around the timetable you have, as many of you may feel restricted by existing work and jobs, as well as family responsibilities and parenting, so many courses have a variety of options that can suit these needs. Be it online, flexible courses or in-person learning, with access to crèches for childcare, there are numerous ways to explore how you can best learn the digital skills you need to get ahead - both for your individual personal growth as well as improving yourself as a candidate to employers everywhere.

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Apply today

Find the right course for you today, and get ahead with improving your digital skills and awareness to make yourself a better candidate or employee, and a safer user online.

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