Guide 21: Assess the skills your business needs

Your goal

Identify the skills needed to launch and run your business. Compare them with your own skills and decide where you need support.

An attractive product idea is not enough on its own. Someone must organise the work, serve customers, manage money, and deliver the product reliably.

What to produce

An individual skills assessment. Explain your strengths, areas for development, and skills important to your business.

You can use paper or your own document. An online assessment can provide ideas, but it is not the only way to examine your skills. Follow your teacher's instructions. Do not share private information with an assessment website without checking its requirements.

Key terms

- **Skill:** an ability used to complete a task.
- **Technical skill:** knowledge or ability for a particular type of work, such as sewing or using a spreadsheet.
- **People skill:** an ability used when working with others, such as listening or resolving disagreement.
- **Core competency:** an important ability that helps a business carry out its work well.
- **Outsource:** arrange for an outside person or business to do work for the business.

A skill is not simply a personality label. “I am confident” does not show whether you can explain a price clearly or keep accurate records. Look for examples of actions.

Step 1: List the work

Read your canvas, supply chain, marketing plans, and financial statement. Identify what people would need to do.

For a product business, this could include making items, checking quality, contacting suppliers, handling orders, and keeping financial records. A service may need different technical skills but still needs organisation and customer communication.

Include leadership and teamwork where relevant. Allocating work fairly, following through, and dealing with problems can affect whether the business succeeds.

Step 2: Connect work to skills

For each important task, name the skill required. Be specific.

“Marketing” is a broad area. “Write a clear message for our target customers” is a more useful skill to assess.

Do not make a long list of unrelated strengths. Focus on abilities your business actually needs.

Step 3: Examine your current skills

Use examples from school, hobbies, part-time work, or previous project tasks. What have you done independently? Where did you need help?

You can use simple descriptions such as “can do independently,” “can do with support,” and “need to learn.” These labels are optional aids, not official project categories.

Be honest about uncertainty. An online score or a friend's opinion can start a discussion, but it does not prove that you can perform a business task.

Example: Ready Pouch

Ready Pouch is our fictional example business. Its proposed product is a small pencil pouch for students.

This is a fictional skills assessment, not a report about real students.

One team member can calculate and explain unit costs accurately. This supports the finance plan. The same person cannot yet use a sewing machine to make a reliable seam.

The business needs both financial accuracy and safe production. A possible plan is to learn basic sewing with suitable supervision and practise on sample fabric. The team would check the result before promising a production quantity.

Another option is to obtain finished pouches from a supplier. This could reduce the need for sewing skills, but it changes costs, delivery control, and possibly the product design. Outsourcing does not remove the need to check quality.

The assessment therefore connects a skill gap to a real business decision. It does not label a person as “bad at business.”

Step 4: Plan support

Choose how to address important gaps: practise, training, a course, advice, a new team role, or an outside supplier. Explain why the choice is realistic.

If you work in a team, compare the skills available across the group and agree responsibilities. Do not assume that a team member can perform a task simply because they enjoy it.

Each student should still complete an individual assessment. You do not need to share personal weaknesses publicly.

Your turn

For each important skill, record:

1. The business task it supports.
2. What you can do now, with an example.
3. What you still need to learn or obtain.
4. How you could address the gap and check progress.

Then summarise which strengths and gaps matter most for your business.

Check your work

- My assessment relates to the business I am planning.
- I included relevant technical and people skills.
- I used examples rather than only labels or scores.
- My plan for support is realistic.
- If I work in a team, responsibilities reflect available skills.

Next: Measure performance

In Unit 4, Task 2, you will select indicators that show progress towards business goals.

Independent guidance based on the AP Business with Personal Finance CED, printed pages 172-173. This is not an official College Board resource.