

What You'll Need to Learn

Reading

"Reading skills are also valued by employers. A 2006 survey by the Conference Board, which conducts research for business leaders, found that nearly 90 percent of employers rated "reading comprehension" as "very important" for workers with bachelor's degrees. Department of Education statistics also show that those who score higher on reading tests tend to earn higher incomes" (Motoko).

Rich, Motoko. "The Future of Reading: Literacy Debate: Online, R U Really Reading?." *New York Times*. 27 Jul 2008: A.1. SIRS Issues Researcher. Web. 02 Jan 2012.

Writing

"According to managers at packaged food company General Mills Inc., which hires roughly 50 M.B.A. graduates a year, business-school graduates are data-savvy but don't always communicate marketing research effectively.

New M.B.A. hires 'tend to talk about their analytical methods to show they are good at their jobs," says Angela Rassi, a marketing manager on General Mills' recruiting team. "What we really want to talk about are the implications of the research" (Middleton)

Middleton, Diana. "Business Education: Students Struggle for Words." *Wall Street Journal* 3 Mar. 2011: B:8. SIRS Issues Researcher. Web. 21 Jan 2012.

Soft Skills

"In a 2005 survey commissioned by the Washington-based National Association of Manufacturers, 84 percent of responding members said K-12 schools weren't doing a good job in preparing students for the workplace. Nearly half indicated their current employees had inadequate basic employability skills, such as attendance, timeliness, and work ethic. Forty-six percent reported inadequate problem-solving skills, and 36 percent pointed to insufficient reading, writing, and communication skills.

Another poll last year sponsored by an influential Washington group, the Business Roundtable, found that 62 percent of the public thought public high schools were not doing a good job "adequately preparing graduates to meet the demands they will face in college and the world of work."

But Michael J. Handel, an associate professor of sociology at Northeastern University in Boston, noted that while employers complain about the skills of young and high-school-educated workers, "it is unclear whether they are dissatisfied mainly with workers' cognitive skills or rather with their effort and attitude" (Olson).

Olson, Lynn. "Beyond Grade 12: Preparing for College and Careers--Ambiguity About Preparation for Workforce Clouds Efforts to Equip Students for Future." *Education Week*. 24 May 2006. SIRS Issues Researcher. Web. 21 Jan 2012.

Life

We cannot expect a government to say to children, "You are going to have to live in a world full of mass movements, both religious and political, mass ideas, mass cultures. Every hour of every day you will be deluged with ideas and opinions that are mass produced, and regurgitated, whose only real vitality comes from the power of the mob, slogans, pattern thinking. You are going to be pressured all through your life to join mass movements, and if you can resist this, you will be, every day, under pressure from various types of groups, often of your closest friends, to conform to them.

"It will seem to you many times in your life that there is no point in holding out against these pressures, that you are not strong enough.

"But you are going to be taught how to examine these mass ideas, these apparently irresistible pressures, taught how to think for yourself, and to choose for yourself.

"You will be taught to read history, so as to learn how short-lived ideas are, how apparently the most irresistible and persuasive ideas can, and do, vanish overnight. You will be taught how to read literature, which is the study of mankind by itself, so as to understand the development of people and peoples. Literature is a branch of anthropology, a branch of history; and we will make sure that you will know how to judge an idea from the point of view of long-term human memory. For literature and history are branches of human memory, recorded memory.

"To these studies will be added those new branches of information, the young sciences of psychology,

social psychology, sociology and so on, so that you may understand your own behavior, and the behavior of the group which will be, all your life, both your comfort and your enemy, both your support and your greatest temptation, since to disagree with your friends—you group animal—will always be painful.

"You will be taught that no matter how much you have to conform outwardly—because the world you are going to live in often punishes unconformity with death—to keep your own being alive inwardly, your own judgment, your own thought."

Well, no, we cannot expect this kind of thing to be in the curriculum laid down by any state or government currently visible in the world. But parents may talk and teach like this, and certain schools may" (Lessing 74-6).

Lessing, Doris. *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside*. New York: Harper Collins, 1987. Print.

- Given these suggestions, what do you think sounds engaging? Why
- Which do you think you'll need to work on the most?