





This participant playbook is part of a series created for the course “Game Changers: Gaming Skills and the Workplace.” Built in a modular fashion to allow for maximum flexibility, this course provides training on real-world skills that can be developed and practiced in a game-based environment. Using a combination of facilitated lessons, activities, research, and games, this course will help teach a new generation of job seekers the 21<sup>st</sup> Century soft skills critical to Canadian employers. Modules in this course include:



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### **Agenda:**

1. Introduction
2. Observation Skills
3. Activity: Check Your Observation Skills
4. Practicing Observation Skills in Real Life Circumstances
5. Observation Activities and Exercises
6. Sharpening Both Observation Skills and Reactions
7. Selecting the next session's topic
8. Wrap-up and take-away

### 1. Introduction

Observation skills start with watching people and events, but we use more than just our eyes to observe the world around us. Strong observation skills use all of our senses, and our minds as we think about what we've observed and make decisions based on what it means.

What have you observed about how we interact in this classroom?

**What I've observed about our class:**

Ex. We always start on time

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**What it means:**

Ex. The teacher thinks it's important to stick to a schedule

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Self-observation is an element of this skill as well. If you looked at yourself in a mirror, photograph, or video what would you notice?

**What I've observed about myself**

Ex. I'm not very tall

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**What it means**

Ex. I can't reach things in high places without help

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## 2. Observation Skills

The ability to observe our surroundings and make logical conclusions based on what we see is a very important skill. It can help us connect with and respond to situations and people more effectively.

How and why we observe the world around us is changing. Technology makes it easier to find out what's happening with friends and family and in the world around us effortlessly. We don't have to look very hard to find information – it's an internet search away all the time. Because devices and websites record our search history and where we go online, information they think we want is presented to us without even asking.



It's not only technology that has changed our observation skills. We don't need to carefully observe the animals and plants around us to find our next meal for example, or to protect ourselves from predators. What we need to observe is different in today's world.

What are some examples of times when you need to pay attention and carefully observe what's happening around you?

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Why do you need to be observant in these circumstances?

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With strong observation skills, you:

- become \_\_\_\_\_ of what is happening around you in ways that can benefit both yourself and others.
- recognize potential \_\_\_\_\_ and possible \_\_\_\_\_ when they arise.
- notice and begin to anticipate other people's \_\_\_\_\_.
- become a better \_\_\_\_\_.

Unfortunately even with all of these advantages, not everyone has strong observation skills. So, what are the roadblocks that could stop us from observing the world around us cleanly?

### Overstimulation

Too much input  
to \_\_\_\_\_  
on everything  
at once

Subconscious  
filtering out of  
things that are  
probably \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ change based  
on personal  
circumstance

What do you automatically tune out? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you automatically see, hear or notice? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Distractions

Distractions can be either external, or internal. List examples of each below:

#### External

Ex. Texting while driving

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#### Internal

Ex. Having a headache

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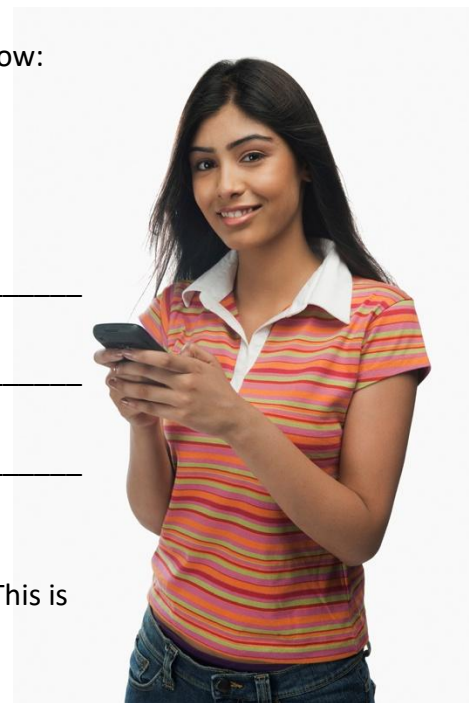


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To be observant we have to be fully present and aware in the moment. This is sometimes referred to as “mindfulness.”



### Avoidance

If something is unpleasant, difficult or stressful, we may choose not to pay attention to it. Avoiding things that make us uncomfortable is a natural instinct and a particularly common problem when it comes to handling \_\_\_\_\_. We may procrastinate dealing with it and decide to do other, less upsetting things first.

When we wait in line or walk from one place to another, we often lower our eyes or look at our \_\_\_\_\_ rather than at the people and things around us. This “distraction bubble” protects us from having to interact with others, but is also a barrier stopping us from seeing things that may be right in front of us.





### Assumptions

We assume that we will see what's right in front of us – we perceive our observation skills to be good. Unfortunately that perception isn't always reality.

We can't observe everything all at the same time, so we often fill in the blanks of what we don't observe. That can lead us to believe things happened that we didn't actually see. The assumptions we make about what we didn't see may turn out to be true, but not always.



**Scenario:** You are working in a restaurant kitchen, and hand a plated meal to a server. As you do, a flare-up on the grill catches your attention and you turn to look at it. While you're distracted, you hear a plate of food crash to the floor near you.

**Discussion:** What could have happened? Come up with as many different scenarios as you can and record notes in the space provided below.

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We can easily make assumptions when doing repetitive tasks. We may assume that since all the other times we did something we got the same result, when we do it again, the same thing will happen. We may not even notice if it doesn't.



“People are confident that when something unexpected or distinctive happens right in front of you, you’ll automatically notice it and it will draw attention to itself. Our intuitions about what we notice are consistently wrong.”

~ Daniel Simons

Watch the video about “Counter-Intuition” by speaker Daniel Simons, and answer the questions below. Prepare to take the answers up with the rest of the class after the video.

1. What does the speaker call thinking that we see, notice and remember far more than we actually do?

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2. What is it called when we don’t notice things that are changing around us because we’re otherwise distracted – especially if we’re distracted by looking for changes somewhere else?

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3. What percent of people didn’t notice a change when people went by with the door?

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4. What is one implication of not being right about what we confidently believe we’ve observed and remember?

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How can you develop strong observation skills?

Through \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

There are specific courses you can take for the workplace, or for driving. Health and Safety training, WHMIS, and Defensive Driving are all good examples.

Later in today's session we'll be looking at some techniques that can help you develop stronger observation skills, and you'll pick one to practice outside the classroom. Be prepared to report back on what you noticed in the next session.

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### 3. Activity: Check Your Observation Skills

In a moment, we'll ask you to sit comfortably; put down anything you have in your hands, and close your eyes. Your teacher will ask you a series of questions. Whether you can answer them or not will depend on your observation skills. You cannot open your eyes to look – if you know the answer, simply raise your hand, and your teacher will choose people to share.

Were you surprised by what you had observed and remembered, and what you had not?



#### 4. Practicing Observation Skills in Real Life Circumstances

If you were ever in an accident or had your car break down on the side of the highway, would you be able to accurately guide a tow truck, a friend, or the police to your location?

When riding in or driving a car, there are a lot of things to pay attention to other than exactly where you might be found on a map. What sort of things do you typically focus on when you're in the car?

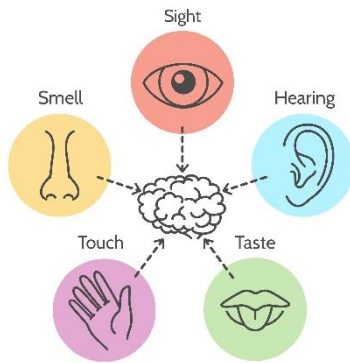
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Practice your observation skills by knowing first whether you're travelling eastbound or westbound on the highway. Make a note of what towns you pass, and which ones are coming up. Look for mile markers along the highway, which are valuable location points used by emergency services to send help.

## 5. Observation Activities and Exercises



**High Five:** In this activity you use all five of your senses to observe what is happening around you. In a notebook, record of one thing that you can see, one thing you can smell, one thing you can taste, one thing you can feel, and one thing you can hear.

**Focus In:** In this activity you make a note of as many things you can observe using only one of your five senses. For example, if you choose hearing you will write down all of the sounds you can hear along with what is making each sound. If you're not sure where the sound is coming from, write a list of things that could make that sound (ex. I hear a distant humming noise. It could be an airplane, or the motor of a lawn mower, or a truck driving by in the distance).



**Colour by Numbers:** In this activity, you pick both a colour and a number, and challenge yourself to find that exact number of coloured items near you.

**Gotcha:** In this exercise, you will pick one random object or item, and look for it throughout the day. For example, count how many dogs you can see during the day. Find as many people in uniform (security guards, UPS drivers, paramedics, etc.) as you can. Actively count the number of door handles you touch in a day. Make a point of recognizing that these things were there all along – you just weren't forcing yourself to observe them.





**Hidden in Plain Sight:** In this exercise, challenge yourself to find one thing you have never seen or noticed in your surroundings before. Look around your home, school, or neighbourhood and identify one item you've never actually recognized was there before now. Consider whether the item is new, or if it's been there before, but you simply hadn't noticed.

**People Watching:** In this activity, your main goal is to watch other people and think about the following things:

1. What are they wearing, and why they might have picked those clothes? What is the message they're trying to send?
2. How are they holding themselves, what's their posture like, and how do they interact with others? Do they seem confident, shy, worried, distracted? How can you tell?
3. Does anyone you observe make you feel uncomfortable? Ask yourself why. What is it about this person that makes you feel that way? Is it their behaviour, how they look, how they are dressed, the setting?



**Connection:** Guess what the relationship is between two people who are talking to one another. Does one person have more power or influence than the other? Do you think they're related? Is their relationship comfortable, or strained? How can you tell?



## 6. Sharpening Both Observation Skills and Reactions



We're going to practice both observing and reacting to our observations by playing a competitive, fast-action game called Ghost Blitz. In this game, five game pieces are placed in the centre of the table, and you must decide which one to pick up based on what you observe on a card that is flipped over for you to review. React quickly, and you'll be the first to grab the piece and win the card – whoever has the most cards by the end of the game wins.

**Note:** This is a competitive game that can be played by up to 8 people at a time. If you don't play the game, be sure to watch carefully and make notes about what you saw. Your facilitator will ask you to share your observations after the game.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** What did you find most challenging about that game? \_\_\_\_\_

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What would make it task easier for you to figure out what piece to pick up? \_\_\_\_\_

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Was it easier to identify the object you needed to grab when it appeared on the card accurately, or when it was missing from the card?

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## 7. Selecting the next session's topic

We will be discussing another skill from the list during our next session. Each of these skills can be developed and practiced in a gaming environment, and are important not only in games, but in a non-gaming environment.

1. Verbal communication
2. Non-verbal communication
3. Observation skills
4. Decision making
5. Problem solving
6. Teamwork
7. Flexibility and adaptability
8. Work ethic
9. Conflict resolution
10. Resiliency

Which skill should we look at next? Participate in the poll to let your workshop facilitator know.





## 8. Wrap-up and take-away

In today's session we looked at several different exercises that people can do to practice and enhance their observation skills. Choose one of those activities to try between now and the next session. Your facilitator will be asking about this at the start of the next session.

Which exercise will you do?

- ☐ High Five (use all five of your senses to observe what is happening around you)
- ☐ Focus In (observe as many things you can using only one of your five senses)
- ☐ Colour By Numbers (pick both a colour and a number, then find that number of coloured items near you)
- ☐ Gotcha (pick one random object or item, and look for it throughout the day)
- ☐ Hidden in Plain Sight (find things you have never noticed before)
- ☐ People Watching (observe how someone dresses, acts, and what it tells you)
- ☐ Connection (observe & interpret a relationship between two people)

Be sure to take notes during your exercise so you can share the results at our next session.

**Reminder:** record the date and time of our next session below.

The next session is: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.