

Skills Check Lists: Apprentice Evaluation

Instructions for Mentors: the apprentice skills checklists are to be used as a tool by both mentor and apprentice to ensure apprentice progress in key skills and knowledge areas, per relevant category (see below). Use the templates below to create your own skills checklist tables based on the skills that will be taught on your specific operation during the 8-month apprenticeship.

- Copy-Paste the sample table provided below into a new document.
- Use the additional sample categories and skills lists as a guide to create your own set of checklist tables. Listed skills that are irrelevant to your operation may be deleted, and missing skills added.
- Send your completed checklist to NAP for discussion and review. The final, agreed-upon version will be filed with the New Agrarian Program.
- The checklists will be revisited annually during the apprenticeship debrief with NAP staff, and edited or updated as needed for the following season.
- Once checklists are final, schedule a meeting with your apprentice to review listed skills, and conduct an initial baseline evaluation to determine the apprentice’s starting point for each skill. Both you and your apprentice should sign and date the document to indicate that you have read it. Make copies of signed document for both of you, and create an evaluation schedule for the rest of the apprenticeship.
- Schedule a total of four evaluation meetings throughout the 8-month period (every 2 months) to go over checklists and discuss general progress.
- Previous to the evaluation meeting, ask your apprentice to self-evaluate for each category in the list, according to the evaluation guide below. During the meeting, you will evaluate the apprentice and provide feedback.
- You and your apprentice will both update your individual checklists during the meeting, such that both contain the same information.
- At the end of each check-in, confirm date for the following check-in.
- Send a copy of updated checklist to NAP after each evaluation.

While the check-lists motivate the need to meet every other month to evaluate the apprentice’s progress in the specific categories listed on their checklist, meetings also offer the opportunity for mentors and apprentice to touch base on a deeper level with regards to how the apprentice is doing in general, how s/he is handling the work pace, culture of operation, rapport with mentors and other crew members, etc.

Evaluation Guide: mark the date for each meeting. Under the appropriate column (“App” for apprentice self-evaluation, “Ment” for mentor evaluation), use the following guide to evaluate apprentice progress for each specific skill or knowledge area:

N/A	Not applicable
0	No exposure yet
1	Has been demonstrated and observed
2	Beginner: has been practiced under supervision
3	Intermediate: shows increased skill and competence but requires further instruction/practice
5	Mastery: has successfully performed this task independent of supervision

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY										
Skill	Baseline		Month 2		Month 4		Month 6		Month 8	
Date →										
	App	Ment	App	Ment	App	Ment	App	Ment	App	Ment
Basic safety procedures										
Feeding and watering										
Moving/Herding										
Animal Handling										
Breeding / AI										
Pregnancy / Birth										
Castrating										
Branding										
Basic Healthcare / Treatment										
Culling / Slaughtering										
Organic vs. Non-Organic										
Nutritional needs										
Mineral supplements										

LAND MANAGEMENT & STEWARDSHIP

- Basic soil health/ecology
- Grass, plant, forage ID
- Making a grazing plan
- Setting up and moving single-wire electric fence
- Manure composting / management
- Pasture management
- Holistic Management essentials
- Managing animals to heal the land

DAIRY

- Moving the dairy herd
- Milking
- Milk handling / storage
- Recognizing common health issues
- Treating common health issues

CHEESE MAKING

- Raw versus pasteurization
- Basic cheese making
- Cheese aging / affinage
- Aging room maintenance and care
- Cheese room maintenance and care

TREE FARMING & ORCHARD MANAGEMENT

- Basic soil science
- Beneficial versus harmful plants and weeds
- Beneficial insects versus pests
- Planting bare root trees
- Weed control strategies
- Bench and bud grafting
- Tree pruning
- Fruit production / processing / marketing
- Drip irrigation / installation / maintenance
- Compost making / processing / utilizing
- Healthy physical labor / body mechanics
- Tree planting and transplanting

TOOLS and EQUIPMENT

- Truck / tractor basic operation
- Truck / tractor troubleshooting and mechanics
- Changing a tire
- Changing the oil
- Operation of hand tools
- Operation of power tools
- Chainsaw safety / maintenance / operation
- Backing up a trailer
- Operating manual transmission
- Basic welding

HORSEMANSHIP

- Approach and catch horse safely
- Halter, bridle, and saddle
- Lead, turn, and back horse
- Loading into a trailer
- Tying safely
- Grooming
- Picking up and cleaning hooves
- Mounting and dismounting
- Posture, balance, body positioning
- Hand position and use of reins
- Start and stop
- Comfort walking
- Comfort trotting

PLANT CULTIVATION and MANAGEMENT

- Basic soil science
- Beneficial and harmful plants and weeds
- Beneficial insects versus harmful pests

- Irrigation installation and maintenance
- Compost making / processing / using
- Healthy physical labor / body mechanics
- Weed control strategies
- Nursery crop production
- Cover cropping
- Soil mixture and preparation
- Preparing seedbeds
- Crop planning and rotations
- Harvesting
- Canning and preserving
- Seed saving
- Marketing

BUSINESS PLANNING and FINANCES

- Annual budget / planning
- Quickbooks / record keeping
- Market research
- Marketing / designing packaging
- Website design / maintenance
- Understanding certification process
- Customer service
- Supervising others
- Planning and facilitating weekly team meetings
- Time management

WORK PLACE ETHICS and ETIQUETTE

- Adaptable to changing schedules
- Reliable; good follow through
- Punctual; good time management
- Open and clear communication; good listener
- Inquisitive, engaged, eager to learn, self-motivated
- Observant / attention to detail
- Proactive, sees what needs attention, anticipates needs
- Friendly, polite, engaged with mentors and other crew
- Physical fitness and stamina
- Good self-care; shows up in morning rested and ready to go
- Able to express needs
- Able to receive feedback
- Good stress management