



Career Focus - SKILLS AND ABILITIES

TYPE OF SKILLS & ABILITIES

One of the most important things you can do before looking for work or start with studies is to consider what skills and abilities you already have. These are your most valuable assets and are very important. Three kinds of skills you need in the world of work are:

Technical skills are the specialized skills and knowledge required to perform specific duties, sometimes referred to as ‘work skills’.

Transferable skills are the skills required to perform a variety of tasks. They are your greatest asset as they can be ‘transferred’ from one area of work to another.

Personal skills are the individual attributes you have such as personality and work habits. These often describe what you are like and how you would naturally go about doing things. Personal skills will often be related to how you fit into ‘the team’ or the ‘culture of the workplace’. Too often, we only think about our technical skills as they are easiest to identify. These are important; but employers want a person who can approach the task and interact with others too. If you have a clear understanding of your skills, it helps you to become more confident with employers. It also helps you to consider other patterns and forms of employment and should enable you to explore realistic work options.

I’m sure that you’ve heard it said before; qualifications and academic records are not the be all and end all when it comes to finding a job. Employers, universities and sponsors are interested in attitude and evidence that applicants have consistently gone above and beyond what is expected of them.

The easiest way to illustrate the latter point is through developing the key skills that employers look for. Interpersonal skills, the ability to communicate effectively and proactive problem-solving are just a few of the skills that are useful, regardless of industry. That’s why they’re known as “transferable skills”.

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TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Transferable skills that employers and course tutors look for:

- **Communication skills** – written and oral: this means the ability to get your point across to the person(s) you are talking or writing to.
- **Problem solving skills:** the ability to break down a problem into small elements and to work out a solution.
- **Teamworking skills:** being able to work with a group of people, recognising their strengths and how they relate to yours. The aim is to produce better results than would be achieved by the team members working on their own.
- **Leadership skills:** being able to work with a group of people and to encourage them to work together to achieve a goal. It can include identifying the goal for the team and persuading them to commit to it.
- **Innovation and creativity:** coming up with new ways of doing things.
- **Interpersonal skills:** the ability to get on with other people; showing respect, listening carefully, for example.
- **Organisational and planning skills:** being well organised and thinking ahead, so that surprises are kept to a minimum.
- **Time management skills:** being able to work out which things are the most important and to make sure that they get the most time. It's also vital that the least important are not just forgotten, but are given the necessary time too.
- **Attention to detail:** paying attention to the small tasks that make up the big picture.
- **Flexibility:** being willing to change the way or the order in which you do things.
- **Self-motivation:** being able to work on your own without the manager having to watch what you do all the time.
- **Commitment:** being dedicated to the organisation and/or the task.
- **Reliability/dependability:** linked to self motivation and commitment, as you can be counted on to achieve what you are asked to do all the time.
- **Willingness to learn:** always being prepared to learn new things.

Not all of these skills will be required in every job (or developed by all courses), which shows the importance of researching courses and jobs before applying.



How can scholars develop transferable skills?

Extra-curricular activities

The easiest way to develop these skills is through involvement in extra-curricular activities. For example, any form of community service facilitates the development of interpersonal skills as learners begin to understand how to interact effectively with people from different backgrounds. Even in-class exercises such as conducting presentations to the class, facilitate the development of important communication skills and confidence in public speaking.



Work experience

Any form of job shadowing, work experience or a part-time job facilitates the development of a variety of skills. From interacting with difficult customers to understanding how to behave in a professional work environment, the learning opportunities are endless.

You should ask yourself questions such as: where are my biggest skills gaps? How can I develop these? When putting together an action plan, it's important that you include dates to hold yourself accountable to.

“A winner is someone who recognizes his God-given talents, works his tail off to develop them into skills, and uses these skills to accomplish his goals.” - Larry Bird

Some important Events to look forward to :



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