

Identifying Transferable Skills

What are transferable skills?

Transferable skills are skills developed in one setting (eg. part-time employment or captaining a sports team) that can be transferred to another (eg. graduate position).

What skills are valued in the job market?

Chris Perry, General manager of National Graduate Recruitment at Chandler & Macleod, states that:

“When it comes to recruiting graduates, you might sometimes wonder how we differentiate between thousands of applications coming in the top of the funnel. Well to start with, all (and I mean all) employers want the “balanced graduate”.

According to Chris Perry the “balanced graduate” has the following profile:

- Sound academic performance and relevance of the degree to the job.
- Effective team member (at university, work, sport, extra-curricular activities).
- Demonstration of leadership qualities.
- Involvement in extra-curricular activities
- Relevant work experience
- Career reasoning (inter-relationship between education, work experience, personal interests, and other activities).

Here is a list of skills that employers value in graduates:

- Written and spoken communication
- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Interpersonal and relationship building
- Time management skills
- Team work
- Ethical and professional attitude
- Initiative
- Self-motivated with a strong sense of responsibility
- Able to work under pressure and meet deadlines
- Flexible and adaptable

Why identify transferable skills?

Clearly, identifying your transferable skills and communicating them to prospective employers is very important.

The numerous transferable skills you possess equip you with much more than the title of your degree suggests. About one third of graduates find work in fields unrelated to their course of study, as they can effectively pinpoint their transferable skills and match them to the needs of employers.

In particular, having a clear sense of transferable skills can help you to:

- build self-confidence and recognise the value of your skills (mostly we tend to under-rate ourselves)
- write effective resumes, selection criteria responses, and letters of application,
- perform better in interview situations by clearly articulating skills you bring to the job
- build your portfolio of skills, identify gaps and plan skill development to continually enhance your employability

How to identify transferable skills?

Below are some useful strategies that will assist you in identifying your transferable skills:

Strategy 1: Analyse what you have done

Events:

List of Skills & Qualities Demonstrated...

Part-time job

Project team at uni

Take a blank sheet of paper and list all significant events and activities you have been involved in. For each event, list the skills you used and qualities you demonstrated.

Strategy 2: Think laterally about sources of skills

Transferable skills come from various areas of our lives. They can be derived from employment, education, voluntary work, sporting activities, travelling and many other situations. The table on page 4 presents examples of skills gained from different life activities.

Transferable skills gained through various activities				
<i>Employment</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Voluntary work</i>	<i>Sport</i>	<i>Travel</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • customer service • interpersonal skills • team work • administrative tasks • supervision • time management • punctuality • work ethics • attention to detail • flexibility • adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research skills • analytical skills • problem solving • starting & completing projects • time management • goal setting • planning • working to deadlines • working under pressure • team work • leadership • presentation skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • team work • interpersonal skills • customer service • commitment • perseverance • caring for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team work • achieving the goals of the team • cooperation • perseverance • commitment • aiming for excellence • leadership qualities • communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goal setting • planning • budgeting • flexibility • adaptability • problem solving • making decisions on your feet • appreciation of other cultures

Review the activities in this table. Have you been involved in these types of activities? Have you developed and used these transferable skills? Perhaps you have additional activities and skills not included in this table. What could you add to this list?

Most of us are not conscious of the extent of our skills; spending time to identify these skills is important. We often use the word 'JUST' or 'ONLY' in front of what we have done to demean it. It is highly recommended that you delete the words 'JUST' and 'ONLY' from your vocabulary when marketing yourself to prospective employers.

Strategy 3: Complete a skills inventory or checklist

Another strategy to identify your skills is to complete an inventory or checklist. On the following pages, you will find a very comprehensive list of skills that could be developed through tertiary studies, work experience and other life experiences. Completing a checklist is a great way to take a comprehensive look at your skills.

Strategy 4: Build evidence of your success

Keep a portfolio (i.e. an ongoing file) of all positions held (paid or voluntary), events and activities that you have participated in and achievements gained. Make a note of skills gained and qualities demonstrated. Collect evidence of your achievements, including positive comments made by supervisors, peers and customers. Throughout your career you will apply for many jobs. An up-to-date career portfolio means you always have an easy reference to demonstrate evidence of your abilities. Thus, you can quickly take advantage of job and career opportunities.

Transferable Skills Checklist

Instructions

1. **Tick** which skills have you developed
2. In the next column, **rate your level of skill** from 1 - 4 according to the Rating Key below. (NB. If you tend to be critical about your level of skill, enlist a friend to help give a balanced view)
3. For your most important or the most relevant skills, describe a **situation** where you have demonstrated this skill. This will provide evidence of your skills.

Rating Key

- 1 = interested, but not skilled
- 2 = partly skilled
- 3 = skilled
- 4 = highly skilled

<i>Tick</i>	<i>Skill</i>	<i>Rate</i> (1-4)	<i>Situation</i>
Communication Skills			
Effective Writing			
	Report writing		
	Essay writing		
	Reviewing		
	Editing		
	Preparing talks		
	Research		
	Documenting		
	Referencing		
	Preparing drafts		
	Proof reading materials		
	Analysing documents		

	Letters to customers		
	Minutes of meetings		
Effective Speaking			
	Making speeches		
	Leading a group		
	Instructing		
	Debating		
	Interviewing		
	Advising		
	Counselling		
	Persuading		
	Establishing a network		
	Chairing meetings		
	Communicating with a range of clients		

<i>Tick</i>	<i>Skill</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Situation</i>
<i>(1-4)</i>			
Listening			
	Active listening		
	Checking for understanding		
	Reflecting		
	Summarising		
	Clarifying		
	Encouraging		
Languages Other Than English			
	Conversing		

	Being understood		
	Writing		
	Reading		
	Understanding		
	Thinking		
	Translating		
	Recognising cultural cues		
Computing			
	Data entry		
	Word processing		
	Desk top publishing		
	Creating spreadsheets		
	Creating databases		
	Building web sites		
	Multi-media design		
	Analysing		
	Interpreting		
	Calculating		
	Developing		
	Designing		
	Simulating		
	Programming		
<i>Team Work</i>			
Cooperation			
	Helping in a crisis		
	Facilitating		
	Consulting others		

	Promoting trust		
	Working with diversity		
	Contributing		
	Sharing tasks		
	Negotiating solutions		
	Confronting issues		
	Accepting differences of opinion		

<i>Tick</i>	<i>Skill</i>	<i>Rate</i> (1–4)	<i>Situation</i>
	Group conflict resolution skills		
	Establishing rapport		
	Negotiating solutions		
	Assertiveness skills		
	Able to follow through on agreements		
	Setting common goals		
	Sharing knowledge		
	Supporting behaviour		
<i>Inspiring & Motivating Others</i>			
	Explaining		
	Mentoring		
	Praising		
	Rewarding		
	Supporting		
	Mediating		
	Recognising skills of others		
	Understanding feelings		

	Helping others to learn		
	Supervising		
	Leading		
Managing & Organising Ability			
	Scheduling events & activities		
	Contingency planning		
	Setting realistic timeframes		
	Reviewing progress		
	Deciding quickly		
	Delegating		
	Supervising staff		
	Enforcing regulations		
	Implementing procedures		
	Inducting new staff		
	Creating staff harmony		
	Change management		
	Providing feedback		
	Providing clear, well-reasoned, purposeful leadership		
	Role model for staff		
	Showing initiative		
	Taking control		
	Develop and recognise talent		
	Conflict resolution skills		
	Mediation skills		

<i>Tick</i>	<i>Skill</i>	Rate (1-4)	Situation
Ability to Work Independently			
	Being self motivated		
	Being self disciplined		
	Knowing own limitations		
	Trusting own judgment		
	Taking responsibility		
	Coping with stress		
	Working to deadlines		
	Managing time effectively		
	Tackling a variety of tasks		
Problem Solving			
Identifying & Analysing			
	Literature searching		
	Collecting data		
	Collating information		
	Organising information		
	Prioritising		
	Speculating		
	Drawing conclusions		
Decision Making			
	Allocating time		
	Allocating money		
	Being realistic		
	Making decisions under pressure		
	Solving problems		

	Judging likely consequences		
Marketing & Promotional Skills			
	Obtaining sponsorship		
	Leading fund-raising efforts		
	Generating new business		
	Identifying & reporting opportunities		
	Establishing business contacts		
Customer Service			
	Meeting customer expectations		
	Delivering services linked to customer needs		
	Presenting a positive image of the organisation		
	Knowledge of organisation policy		
	Attitude of helpfulness		
	Attentive listening		
	No discrimination in service		
Tick	Skill	Rate	Situation
		(1–4)	
Ethical behaviour			
	Fair / equitable treatment		
	Accepting responsibility for behaviour		
	Being openly accountable		
	Following code of correct behaviour		
	High personal standard		
	Following laws, guidelines & regulations		

Time Management			
	Goal setting		
	Planning		
	Setting priorities		
	Attaching timelines to goals and objectives		
	Preparing "to do" lists		
	Use of diaries		
	Meeting deadlines		
	Being punctual		
	Coping with multiple tasks		
	Completing tasks		
Graduate Skills			
	Self motivated		
	Success orientated with a positive attitude		
	Computer skills		
	Organisational skills		
	Leadership		
	Ability to resolve conflict		
	Sense of purpose		
	Research		
	Written communication (Essay, report, exam, project)		
	Verbal presentation		
	Critical analysis		
	Evaluation		
	Working under pressure		

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