

Recognising and Presenting your Skills

You might have very little degree-related work experience, but you probably have many skills and qualities which graduate employers are seeking. Being aware of all of these and how to present evidence of them in your resume, covering letter and interview, can make a big difference to your chances of success in your job search.

Evidence for many of these skills and qualities is acquired through activities which you might not think would be important to your job search, such as part-time and casual jobs, participation in sport, voluntary work, club activities and other life experiences. They are known as transferable skills and qualities as they can be transferred to other environments and situations.

An example:

Joe, a commerce student needed help with his resume, particularly in identifying his skills. When asked what skills he had developed from two years of paid work, he answered 'Nothing, I was just a waiter'. After reflecting on his work at the restaurant, he realised that he had evidence of the following skills and qualities:

What Joe did	Skills and qualities demonstrated
Arrived on time regularly for his rostered shifts	Reliability, punctuality
Waited on tables in a polite, friendly manner	Communication skills
Waited on a large number of tables during busy periods	Skill in prioritising tasks
Worked three nights a week for two years while studying full- time	Time management skills
Suggested changes to workflow in the kitchen which improved efficiency and reduced tension among staff	Problem solving, conflict resolution skills

Gather evidence of your own skills and qualities

Make a list of life experiences through which you have acquired skills. Don't rule out any activities because you find them easy, or you do them so regularly that you take them for granted. Include the following (and any others you can think of):

- All your studies (university, school, technical, vocational, on-the -job training, short courses etc.)
- Any jobs you have had (both paid and unpaid)
- Voluntary work
- Participation in sport, cultural or any other leisure activities
- Any positions you have held (eg. on committees, in clubs)

List all the skills and attributes which you have demonstrated through each experience (as in the example of Joe, above). Use the checklists below to help you identify the skills which you might have overlooked. Keep the list for future reference as you will need to highlight different skills and attributes, depending on the requirements of positions you are applying for.

Present your skills in your job application

Now that you have identified your skills and qualities, it's important that you present evidence of them effectively in your resume, covering letter, responses to selection criteria and job interviews. To begin doing this you need to identify the skills and qualities required in the position and determine which of your experiences best demonstrate that you possess them.

Skills checklists

It is common to find 'demonstrated communication, teamwork, problem-solving and organisational skills' as requirements of applicants, in job advertisements.

Communication

- Communicating well with diverse groups
- Speaking effectively to individuals and groups
- Writing effectively
- Presenting effectively
- Instructing effectively
- Negotiating effectively
- Listening attentively
- Understanding non-verbal communication
- Operating effectively in social situations
- Establishing and using networks
- Expressing feelings appropriately
- Being assertive appropriately
- Being tactful

Teamwork

- Working well with people of different ages, gender, race, religion or backgrounds
- Understanding how to carry out your role within the team
- Identifying and working with the strengths of team members
- Participating effectively in group discussions
- Giving and receiving feedback effectively
- Being open to the ideas of others
- Encouraging and supporting others
- Being co-operative
- Trusting others
- Respecting others
- Being loyal
- Dealing effectively with conflict
- Anticipating the needs of others
- Creating a positive environment

Problem-solving

- Researching
- Gathering, evaluating and using information effectively
- Thinking analytically
- Thinking critically
- Thinking creatively
- Seeing problems in wider context
- Using appropriate methodologies
- Formulating and evaluating hypotheses
- Conducting experiments
- Drawing conclusions on the basis of evidence

Management and organisation

- Being self-disciplined
- Setting personal goals
- Being flexible
- Being able to cope with pressure
- Prioritising and organising tasks effectively
- Handling multiple tasks simultaneously
- Managing time effectively
- Coping with change
- Maintaining self-motivation
- Acting with honesty and integrity
- Being reliable
- Carrying out tasks with thoroughness and precision
- Maintaining appropriate self-presentation
- Evaluating your own strengths and weaknesses