

Employability skills

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Employability skills are highly valued by employers and are crucial for finding work and maintaining employment. These skills are applicable across all disciplines and industries.

Having a clear understanding of employability skills, how they are applied in the workplace, as well as how they can be presented to future employers can help you to:

- Build self-confidence and recognise the value you can add to the workplace.
- Develop effective job application documents – resumes, cover letters and addressing selection criteria.
- Perform well at interviews by clearly articulating the skills and strengths you bring to the role.
- Identify any potential gaps to plan skill development strategies in order to enhance your employability.

The sections below outline highly sought-after employability skills.

Adaptability and flexibility

In a rapidly changing work environment, adaptability is crucial. The ability to remain adaptable involves being open to new ideas, and technologies as well as being able to adjust to changing circumstances. This skill is primarily about responding to change and uncertainty with a positive attitude, being able to adjust working styles and approaches to meet the needs of the situation and demonstrating a willingness to learn. Employers also look for resourcefulness and versatility as well as evidence of agile thinking or cognitive flexibility.



Sub-skills and attributes:

- agility
- cross-functional
- collaboration
- change management
- initiative
- learning mindset
- open-mindedness
- problem-solving
- resourcefulness
- responsiveness
- resilience
- versatility

Gaining and conveying evidence:

Being adaptable or flexible can be demonstrated in many ways, such as:

- Taking on new work experiences including volunteering, part-time work, placements.
- Travelling, living, working or studying abroad.
- Combining full-time academic study with part-time work and personal commitments.
- Joining a new club/team.
- Taking on a new role or additional responsibilities within an existing role.

Examples to include in your job application:

- Demonstrated ability to adapt to changing work environments and learn new skills quickly, including [mention specific examples].
- Adaptable and results-driven professional with a proven track record of excelling in diverse roles and industries.

Communication and interpersonal skills

Strong communication and interpersonal skills increase productivity and efficiency in the workplace. These skills are explicitly required by all employers and the ability to effectively communicate is crucial for success. Communication skills encompass verbal and written communication, active listening, the ability to convey ideas clearly and concisely, and adapting your communication style to suit different situations and audiences. Interpersonal skills on the other hand focus more on how well someone communicates and their ability to build and maintain positive relationships with colleagues, clients and supervisors.

Sub-skills and attributes:

- building relationships
- clarifying
- consulting
- counselling
- empathy
- facilitating
- influencing or persuading
- listening
- motivating or leading others
- negotiating
- networking
- presenting
- report writing
- resolving issues
- self-awareness
- teaching or training
- translating
- working with diverse teams
- cultural awareness
- inclusivity and diversity
- writing

Gaining and conveying evidence:

When demonstrating your communication and interpersonal skills through your job application, include specific examples of when you have developed or evidenced these skills. You can do this by highlighting things like:

- Gaining work experience or working part-time in a customer-facing role.
- Undertaking group work as part of your degree or work placement.
- Becoming a student mentor.
- Taking up a position on a committee or student club.

Remember that your job application is evidence of your written communication skills – punctuation, grammar, spelling, text formatting and tailoring your written style to the context and audience!

Examples to include in your job application:

- Strong written and verbal communication skills demonstrated through [mention examples such as reports, presentations, or customer interactions].
- Dedicated and highly communicative professional with a proven track record of building strong relationships and collaborating effectively with cross-functional teams.
- Reduced customer complaints by x% through effective communication and conflict resolution.

Creativity and innovation

Creativity is a valuable skill in employment, as it can help you generate innovative solutions to problems and stand out in your field. Those who demonstrate creativity are innovative, they share new ideas and fresh perspectives, identify new opportunities and unique solutions to challenging problems, make improvements and think out-of-the-box to produce an effective outcome.



Sub-skills and attributes:

- analytical skills
- curiosity
- generating ideas
- prototyping
- convergent thinking
- design skills
- problem solving
- risk taking

Gaining and conveying evidence:

To demonstrate this as a strength on your resume you need to identify how you initiated something or a time when you have designed something that added value. You can demonstrate creativity through:

- Initiating new strategies to raise money for charity organisations.
- Developing a blog, website or app.
- Initiating and integrating creative solutions to problems identified in the workplace.

Examples to include in your job application:

- Led a dynamic team to brainstorm and implement innovative solutions.
- Increased social media engagement by 40% through creative content strategies.
- If you have a portfolio of creative work (e.g. design samples, writing samples, artwork, projects), include a link to it in your resume providing concrete evidence of your creative abilities.

Critical thinking and problem solving

Employers seek candidates with the capacity to think critically to solve problems, who can make sound judgements and decisions in the workplace. Critical thinking skills involve research, analysis, evaluation, synthesis and reasoning that support approaches to tasks and situations with a logical but questioning and open mind. Problem-solving is our ability to analyse situations, identify problems, and come up with solutions.

Sub-skills and attributes:

- adaptability
- analysing
- assessing risk
- continuous learning
- curiosity
- decision-making
- evaluating
- logical reasoning
- objectivity
- persistence
- producing results
- questioning
- recommending
- researching
- synthesising



Gaining and conveying evidence

You can provide evidence of your critical thinking and complex problem-solving skills by providing examples of when you have effectively addressed issues, identified solutions or worked with other team members to brainstorm ideas and provide suggestions for improvement. For example:

- Engaging in research for an assignment, project or workplace challenge.
- Working to resolve customer complaints in a customer-facing role.
- Collating, analysing, interpreting and evaluating data for a project.

Examples to include in your job application:

- Strong critical thinking skills demonstrated by [mention instances where you used this skill to achieve goals].
- Adept at analysing complex issues and proposing practical solutions, as shown in [mention situations or projects where you solved problems and contributed to positive outcomes].

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are two distinct but closely related skills that are highly sought after in the workplace. Leadership is the ability to take control of a situation and set direction. This is done by empowering, inspiring, and influencing others while management is focused on planning, organising and overseeing the distribution of resources to achieve outcomes. The ability to mentor, influence and motivate, as well as leadership qualities such as commitment, passion, integrity, and confidence are key to demonstrating leadership.

Sub-skills and attributes:

- accountability
- confidence
- credibility
- delegating
- decision-making
- emotional intelligence
- empowering others
- influencing
- initiating
- integrity
- leading
- managing change
- managing performance
- managing stress
- mentoring
- motivating others
- planning and organising
- relationship management
- resilience
- supervising
- strategic planning

Gaining and conveying evidence:

Describe how you overcame challenges, motivated a team, or implemented a successful strategy. If you have held multiple leadership positions within an organisation, highlight the progression of your responsibilities. The ability to demonstrate growth as a leader is impressive. You may have gained or could gain these skills through:

- Captaining a sports team.
- Leading a student club or society.
- Taking the lead on a group project whether in an academic or work setting.
- Becoming a mentor for your course.

Examples to include in your job application:

- Exhibited leadership qualities by [mention roles, initiatives, or teams you have led] and achieved [mention accomplishments].
- Led a team of 10 members to achieve a 20% increase in sales revenue.

Organising and planning

The ability to organise your own time and prioritise your own workload effectively clearly demonstrates to employers that you have well-developed planning and organisational skills. Employers will often ask for these skills when looking for the ability to coordinate other people, events or projects, to identify and set objectives, manage and prioritise resources, and monitor performance against objectives, alongside strong attention to detail and a methodical approach.

Sub-skills and attributes:

- budgeting
- coordinating
- continuous improvement
- detail-orientation
- delegation
- goal setting
- implementing
- managing resources
- measuring performance
- meeting deadlines
- multitasking
- prioritising
- proactive approach
- project management
- scheduling

Gaining and conveying evidence:

You could showcase the sub-skills and attributes above through:

- Organising a charity or sporting event.
- Planning university projects such as your dissertation or final-year project.
- Work experience that involved event or project management.

Examples to include in your job application:

- Experience in effectively managing projects from initiation to completion, resulting in [mention successful project outcomes].
- Identified and implemented improvements that enhanced workflow efficiency and reduced turnaround times.

Self-management and initiative

Both self-management and initiative are highly valued in the workplace as they lead to increased productivity. Those who can effectively manage themselves and their time are better equipped to take initiative by remaining proactive and identifying opportunities to grow and excel. Self-management refers to an individual's ability to control and direct their own actions, emotions and behaviours allowing them to achieve goals and remain productive. It's about setting your own goals and pursuing work with energy, drive and effort to accomplish tasks.



Employers want self-starters who are looking for ways to contribute instead of waiting to be informed of assignments and tasks. The goal is to have employees who proactively seek out ways to propel the business forward. Many employers view initiative as the ability to take ideas and run with them, as well as the capacity to persist in the face of challenges and see projects through to completion. Taking initiative results in the capacity to seek out new responsibilities and work challenges, and increase the variety and scope of your job.

Sub-skills and attributes:

- accountable
- committed
- diligent
- enterprising
- future-focused
- goal-oriented
- growth mindset
- independent
- motivated
- optimistic
- proactive
- productive
- reliable
- responsible
- self-directed
- thorough

Gaining and conveying evidence:

You can demonstrate self-management and initiative through:

- Working independently on tasks during your studies or when undertaking work experience.
- Effectively setting and working towards deadlines.
- Recognising skill gaps and seeking out courses or workshops to address deficits.
- Starting a project in your free time.

Examples to include in your job application:

- Managed a complex workload independently, consistently meeting performance targets and reducing the need for regular supervision.
- Initiated and led a training program for new team members, resulting in a reduction in onboarding timeframes and improved team cohesion.
- Initiated cross-functional collaboration by organising a community of practice to share best practices, resulting in an increase in team productivity and improved service offerings.

Teamwork and collaboration

Teamwork and collaboration are vital aspects of working together effectively within a group and as part of an organisation. Effective teamwork requires team members to listen to one another, communicate clearly, and share information and ideas to ensure that individuals come together to achieve common goals, solve problems, and complete tasks efficiently. The ability to work collaboratively with others demonstrates how you contribute to a team's success and resolve conflicts when they arise.



Sub-skills and attributes:

- active listening
- contributing
- interpersonal skills
- participation
- being reliable
- cooperating
- negotiating
- respect
- building rapport
- emotional intelligence
- offering support
- shared goals
- conflict resolution
- empathy
- open mindedness
- volunteering

Gaining and conveying evidence

Your resume can demonstrate your teamwork skills in a range of different contexts such as:

- Taking a lead role in group work or study group sessions at the university.
- Being an active member of a sports team, band or society.
- Working with others to organise a volunteer project or extracurricular activity.
- Actively contributing as a successful team member in a part-time role or during work experience.

Examples to include in your job application:

- Proven ability to work effectively in a team environment, as evidenced by successful collaboration on [mention projects and/or team achievements].
- Utilised strong communication skills to convey project goals, timelines and objectives, ensuring an aligned team approach.
- Liaised between our department and other teams, streamlining communication and improving efficiency.
- Contributed to team projects by sharing insights and ideas, fostering a positive and productive work environment.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to adapt and bounce back from adversity, setbacks, or challenging situations. It involves maintaining a positive attitude, persevering through difficulties, and learning from failures or mistakes. In the workplace, resilience can help individuals cope with stress, change, and uncertainty, which are common in most workplaces. Furthermore, it fosters a growth mindset, where challenges are seen as opportunities for learning and development. Resilience also contributes to a positive and productive work environment by promoting a solution-focused approach.

Sub-skills and attributes:

- adaptability
- emotional regulation
- optimism
- self-awareness
- confidence
- flexibility
- persistence
- stress management

Gaining and conveying evidence

You can develop resilience by:

- Reflecting on past challenges and how you overcame them.
- Identifying the strategies, support systems, and personal qualities that helped you respond to challenges.
- Seeking out opportunities to step out of your comfort zone, such as taking on new responsibilities, learning a new skill, or participating in extracurricular activities.

Examples to include in your job application:

- Managed competing priorities in a high-pressure environment, delivering projects on time and within budget.
- Adapted quickly to an organisational restructure, maintaining team unity and productivity.