

What are Transferable Skills?

Transferable skills are skills and abilities that are relevant and helpful across different areas of life: socially, professionally and at school. They are 'portable skills'. Transferable skills can often be referred to as **SOFT skills**.

People usually think about their transferable skills when applying for a job or when thinking about a career change. Employers often look for people who can demonstrate a good set of transferable skills.

The good news is that you already have transferable skills – you've developed such skills and abilities throughout your life, at school and perhaps at university, at home and in your social life, as well as through any experience in the work-place.

It is often important that you can identify and give examples of the transferable skills that you have developed - this will go a long way to persuading prospective employers that you are right for the job.

Most people will have at least three different careers during their working life and many of the skills used in one will be transferable to another.

Lack of direct experience is not necessarily a barrier to a new job.

You may think that a lack of relevant, industry-specific experience will stop you from getting a job but this is not always the case. If you are changing careers, have recently graduated, or are looking for your first job, you'll be pleased to learn that employers are often looking for potential. It is vital, therefore, that you sell your potential by demonstrating the transferable skills that you have developed already.

Employers are usually looking for abilities and qualities that they recognise to be present in the most effective employees. These soft skills, such as being able to communicate effectively in a variety of situations, showing initiative, creativity and integrity, and having a good work attitude, are valuable across all industries.

Organisations often use some form of psychometric testing in the interview and/or selection process – such tests are designed to assess a candidate's personality type, skills, talent, and ability and measure their potential rather than pure experience.

Transferable Skills You Need

All skills and abilities can be transferable – depending on where they are being transferred to and from.

When applying for a job you should remember, however, that the type of transferable skills you highlight in a letter of application or in your CV or résumé should be related to the position for which you are applying.

You may think it appropriate to list and give examples of transferable skills that are not included in the following list – there are literally thousands of words and phrases that can describe transferable skills and we include only some of the most common.

Remember that employers will be looking at your potential. There is always an element of risk when it comes to employing new people so think carefully about the type of skills you wish to emphasise and pick examples you can demonstrate to minimise the perceived risk of employing you.

Team Work

Work effectively in a group or team to achieve goals.

In many jobs you will be expected to work as part of a team. Demonstrating your ability to work with others will help to reassure employers that you will 'fit in' and offer a valuable contribution.

Think about examples of when you have worked well with others in formal or informal groups to achieve results. Can you give examples of how, as part of a group, you worked on decision making and problem solving? Think about how you overcame issues and mention your successes. Use examples from previous work experience, from education or from being a member of a social or sports group.

Leadership

Show initiative and leadership abilities

You may not be applying for a role that specifically requires leadership ability but you may well need to be able to demonstrate your capability to lead in certain situations.

There are many skills you need to be an effective leader so think about examples when you have helped to motivate, take responsibility for and lead others effectively to accomplish objectives and goals. You should also consider whether you can delegate effectively and whether you are happy to ask for help when needed. Do you possess a charismatic personality, and what can you do to become more charismatic and build rapport with others?

Personal Motivation, Organisation and Time Management

Manage and prioritise your workload and time effectively

As well as being able to work effectively in a group situation, you are likely to be required to work alone and take responsibility for your time and work.

It is important to demonstrate to potential employers that you have effective time management and personal organisational skills. Mention examples in your covering letter, CV, résumé or during an interview that demonstrate how you have structured and arranged resources to achieve objectives. Think about how you use time management skills on a daily basis. Can you demonstrate effective prioritisation of tasks, how do you avoid distractions and meet deadlines? It may also be useful to think of times when you have been proactive rather than reactive to situations and workloads.

You may also want to think about how you manage personal stress levels, especially when trying to meet deadlines or balance numerous tasks. Any job can be stressful and, although a certain amount of stress can be beneficial, too much can be dangerous to you and costly to the organisation.

Listening

Are you a good listener?

Employers commonly complain about their staff's inability to listen effectively and Richard Branson rates effective listening as one of the most important skills we can develop.

In many job roles you will be required to understand and process important or complex information as not listening effectively can lead to potentially costly mistakes, misunderstandings and lost opportunities.

Most of us can benefit from learning and practicing effective listening techniques. Spend some time thinking about and learning how to listen effectively.

Written Communication

Write accurately, clearly and concisely in variety of styles.

Many job roles will require an element of writing skills. You may be required to adapt your writing style frequently, producing reports, press releases, marketing materials, letters or emails, and you may have to write for the web, for customers, shareholders and colleagues.

Think of examples of when you have communicated ideas and information effectively through writing. In education you may have produced essays, dissertations or project reports, perhaps you have contributed articles to local or social publications or have examples of your writing ability from past work or voluntary experience.

Verbal Communication

Speak clearly and dynamically in a variety of situations.

Employers often require staff with strong verbal communication skills. Can you communicate information and ideas clearly and effectively in a variety of situations?

Think about your verbal communication skills and how you address others, both face-to-face and in group situations. Give examples of presentations or talks that you have given in previous employment, in education or as part of social groups. Demonstrate how you can communicate face-to-face with a variety of different people. Can you be assertive? Are you polite? Can you communicate with tact and diplomacy when necessary? Can you speak in such a way as to enthuse or inspire others? Can you communicate complex ideas in a logical, ordered and concise manner? Can you demonstrate your ability to effectively negotiate? Can you keep your cool in heated exchanges?

Research and Analytical Skills

Gather, interpret and analyse information.

It may be appropriate to demonstrate your ability to research, analyse and critically evaluate information. There could be a variety of complex information that you are required to work with and make sense of, for example sales figures, new product and supplier specifications, technical reports and financial information.

Although specific skills related to business vocabulary and numeracy may be required so too are some more generic skills. You may well have used such skills during your time in education.

Numeracy Skills

Accurately and effectively work with numbers

You may not be applying for a job or pursuing a career in mathematics or statistics but it is likely that some basic understanding of numeracy will be useful. Most jobs will require some numeracy skills. Numeracy is an area that is frequently quoted by employers as lacking – especially amongst graduates.

You should be able to demonstrate that you can work with figures, make calculations, understand graphs, charts and simple statistics and recognise important numerical information and trends.

Personal Development

Know yourself and find ways to develop.

Personal development is an attractive quality to employers. By demonstrating that you are keen to learn and progress, you are likely to be seen as enthusiastic and willing to take on new challenges.

Personal development is about evaluating your own performance and recognising your personal strengths and weaknesses. It may seem counter intuitive to mention weaknesses to a potential employer but talking about the action you are taking to improve and learn new skills indicates good self-awareness.

Information Technology

Effectively use computers and technology.

Many jobs will require that you use word processing, spreadsheet and web-based software on a daily basis. However, think beyond these basic IT skills. Are you confident using a computer? Can you learn how to use new software and new technology quickly? Can you troubleshoot basic computer problems and do you understand the importance of data security and privacy?

The above are just some of the transferable or soft skills that are helpful and relevant throughout many different areas of our lives. Think back on your own life and experience to identify other personal skills you possess that are relevant to what you are trying to achieve.

Remember that Employers WILL look for Potential!

Don't forget to take the QUIZ and identify your strongest Soft Skills and be sure to PRACTICE using these skills

► <https://www.tryinteract.com/quiz/how-strong-are-your-soft-skills/>