

Career Connections Series

Transferable Skills

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Skills include the specific talents, personal qualities, and attributes that we bring to an occupation as well as the tasks we learn while on the job. Every job requires skills, though some skills are more specific to specialized fields than others. People who are clearly aware of their skills and can describe themselves to potential employers in terms of the skills they offer are most likely obtain the jobs they seek and enjoy their careers.

As the job market continues to grow and change at a rapid pace, employers are becoming more interested in transferable skills. Transferable skills are the kinds of qualities and attributes that can be carried from one job to another and are useful in performing many different jobs. Whether you are an anthropology, history, or computer science major, you are developing transferable skills that you will utilize in the world of work as a result of being successful in a college environment.

There are several kinds of transferable skills important to most employers. One of the primary skills employers look for is the ability to communicate. Communication skills involve the ability to listen, speak, and write effectively, negotiate difficulties between people, and convince individuals of the importance of your ideas. Problem-solving and critical thinking are also important skills across occupations. Knowing how to think analytically and abstractly, consider multiple perspectives, and identify a variety of potential solutions to the same problem are characteristics of good problem-solving skills. Human relations skills prepare you to work with diverse groups of people; teach, counsel, advise, or coach people; and provide the ability to cooperate with others to create, perform, and complete projects. Organizational skills are also important to employers, and involve the ability to assess needs, plan or arrange presentations, delegate responsibility, design programs, coordinate events, manage the implementation of projects. Finally, research skills involve searching computerized databases, identifying themes, analyzing, classifying, and recording data, and handling detail work.

Personal characteristics can also be considered a type of transferable skill, in that they can enhance your value as an employee in any work setting. Some of the adjectives employers use to describe the qualities they look for in employers include self-confidence, willingness to accept responsibility, initiative, leadership abilities, flexibility, ability to handle conflict and stress, self-knowledge, interpersonal skills, intelligence, energy level, and imagination.

These skills are critical competencies that employers look for. Your ability to prove you have developed transferable skills as a successful college student will set you apart as you begin to look for employment during and after your college experience. Start to think about specific ways in which you have demonstrated these skills in school, leisure activities, jobs, volunteer projects, or other extracurricular activities. Consider ways in which you can become more involved on and off campus to further develop the skills you lack. The staff at Career Center, Student Services Building Room 185 can also be helpful in identifying and clarifying how to highlight transferable skills on your resume or during an interview.