

Your Skills and Experience

Employers are interested in two main areas:

1. **Your skills and attributes**
2. **Your experience and work background**

1. Skills and Attributes

The main things that potential employers will be looking for in a new employee will be skills and attributes. Your technical or subject specialism skills granted, but **IMPORTANTLY** employability skills such as the following:

Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Communication is both verbal and non-verbal. Employers are looking for employees with excellent communication at all levels. This means presenting and expressing yourself well verbally, conducting yourself professionally and maintaining good body language and appropriate eye contact. It also means writing emails and other written communication skilfully and appropriately. It's not all give though, you must be able to receive and interpret messages from co-workers and line management, practising good listening skills is possibly the most important part of communication and one that gets overlooked. Never forget to listen attentively and actively.

Great interpersonal skills are another employer favourite. This means refining how you participate in meetings with your co-workers, thinking about how you slot into the team and become a respected team player. Are you inclusive? Is your communication with your team appropriate and professional? Building your communication and interpersonal skills takes time and practice and an internship is a great place to hone such skills.

Time Management

How you manage your time is another employability skill that employers are hot on. You will need to demonstrate how you prioritise tasks in terms of urgency and importance, how you balance your own workload and complete tasks on time. Can you multi-task and juggle several things at once?

2. Experience and Work Background

What you have done and where you have been is as important to employers as what you can currently do. Maybe you can speak several languages? You might have lived or studied abroad and be familiar with other cultures. Employers will place a great deal of value on employees who have experienced a different work culture, especially if they come with some lessons learned which they can apply in the current work environment.

Exercise: Make a Note of your career so far

This exercise will help you to start to put flesh on the bones of your CV when you come to write it. A lot of people struggle with putting their 'career' down on paper, especially when

their professional experience may be limited. Employers will not only be interested in professional experience, they will want to know how you have built up your skills and experience in other life areas.

Start to make notes under the following:

Work or team roles and responsibilities at home, school, university or previous work experience – this may be unpaid as well as paid work

Your non-academic achievements at home, school, university or work

The type of role or responsibility you liked and/or were good at and the type of role or responsibility you didn't like and/or need to improve on

The key or influential people/mentors who have supported you and how

How did you go about carrying out a role or responsibility for the first time?

How have you coped with daunting roles or responsibilities and feeling out of your comfort zone?

What new skills have you had to learn in order to carry out roles and responsibilities

Grouping Skills into Positive Packages

You can organise your skills into the following groups which are quite typical of what employers are looking for when recruiting. Now start to group your career story skills with examples:

1. Communicating & Influencing

- Have you faced new social situations and needed to make acquaintances quickly?
- Do you run any groups that require you to stand up and present to an audience?

2. Listening & coaching

- Have you had to listen and support someone through a difficult situation?
- Are you part of any groups where you support others?

3. Managing & motivating people

- Do you run any committees or local groups?
- Have you had to manage people working on a project for example in your home or local charity?

4. Planning & organising

- What events have you organised for your local school, college community, family or friends?
- Have you completed any household projects which required good project management?

5. Managing your time and priorities

- What approach have you taken to manage your college / work duties along with the differing needs of your friends and family?
- Are you good at meeting deadlines or tend to apologise for being late?

6. Managing finances

- Have you had to manage the budget for a significant event such as a large party?
- Have you had to source suppliers and quotes for a project and then manage the budget?

7. Using IT

- How much do you use the computer at home and for what kind of tasks?
- Have you taken any new courses?

8. Solving Problems

- How do you deal with situations that do not go according to plan?

9. Being creative

- A local charity needs to raise funds, can you come up with some new ideas?
- Do you help out at local holiday events such as EID?
- Do you have ideas of your own or tend to be more creative when working with others?

10. Coping in a crisis

- How do you respond to upsetting or challenging situations, e.g. your younger brother or sister is being bullied and refuses to go to school?
- Maybe one of your parents is facing redundancy – what do you do in a situation like this?

11. Learning new skills

- Do you like the opportunity to learn new skills?
- Have you learnt new IT skills recently?

12. Adapting to change

- How do you cope with change – does it scare or excite you?
- Have you ever moved house into a completely new area or country?