

The Skills Section



What is the Skill Section

The skills section of your resume is a place to highlight key skills and traits about yourself that you particularly want employers to know. It is the main part of a functional resume and uses both soft and hard skills.

What are Soft and Hard Skills

Hard Skills are quantifiable skills that you have developed through various experiences. These skills are considered to be more teachable than soft skills. Hard skills include:

- Programming languages.
- The ability to play musical instruments.
- Microsoft office skills.
- Reading comprehension.
- Math skills.
- Kayaking.
- Animal Rearing.

Soft Skills are traits and skills that affect your relationships with others and the workplace. They are not easy to measure and are harder to teach. They are developed through social interaction. Soft skills include:

- Communication.
- Persuasion.
- Emotional Intelligence.
- Active Listening.
- Work Ethic.
- Growth Mindsets.
- Problem-Solving.
- Critical Thinking.
- Time Management.
- Leadership

Are Hard Skills more important than Soft Skills? Or the other way around?

Some people think that hard skills are more important than soft skills because they are the technical skills needed to perform the job. Others might say soft skills are more important than hard skills, especially in public facing jobs where dealing with people is necessary. Overall, they are both about equally as important. Even for non-public facing jobs (such as some computer jobs), soft skills matter. Employers want people who will fit in well in the workplace and who are capable of talking to business partners and clients. Hard skills are also still important in front-facing jobs because employers need you to be able to perform all of your tasks. Do your best to include both kinds of skills in your skills section and/or make them obvious in your work experience section. While you work, go to school, and generally live life, make sure to take time

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with both kinds of skills. Finally, there are many skills that exist in-between hard and soft skills and many, they are sometimes called hybrid skills.

What are Job-Specific and Transferable Skills

Job-Specific Skills are the skills that really only apply to one particular job or task that you might not otherwise be able to use. These skills are learned in professional positions and in school and are not as broad as transferable skills. That being said, they can usually be carried over into other, similar, jobs or broken down to their basics to help learn more transferable skills. Some examples of Job-Specific Skills include:

- Lesson planning.
- Sailboat operation.
- Java script.
- Archival work.
- Microscope techniques.
- Painting.
- Product knowledge.
 - As in knowing about one specific product.

You might have also noticed that these Job-Specific skills are all hard skills. This is because hard skills all train you to be able to complete specific tasks. If you go back up and look at the hard skills, you will find that a lot of them are also Job-Specific skills.

Transferable Skills are skills that are relevant in many if not all jobs. Just like how Job-Specific Skills tend to be hard skills, transferable skills tend to be (but are not limited to) soft skills. These skills are very broad and can help your resume when you are applying for jobs outside of your industry or just outside of your current workplace. Some examples of Transferable skills are:

- Teamwork.
- Independent Work.
- Adaptability.
- Creativity.
- Attention to detail.
- Project management.

One of the differences you might notice between soft and transferable skills is that “project management” requires a mixture of soft and hard skills.

Identifying your Skills

As a student you have a lot of skills, even if it doesn't feel like it. Here's a way to look at your education in terms of the skills you have developed.

1. Take a specific example from tasks that you do daily/monthly/yearly, such as an essay project or a presentation.

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2. Break down the tasks you had to do.
3. Begin looking at broader skills that might apply to those tasks.

Here is an example:

1. A research project essay on the reformation.
2. Tasks included:
 - a. Communicating with professors to learn more about assignment requirements.
 - b. Attending lectures on the reformation.
 - c. Planning when and how you would research and produce your essay.
 - d. Accessing databases and library materials to research.
 - e. Outlining the key parts of your essay and the length of each part.
 - f. Hand-writing or typing out your essay.
 - g. Rereading and revising your essay.
 - h. Connecting with peers to help edit.
 - i. Producing a final draft of your essay.
 - j. Submitting the essay according to the requirements of the professor.
3. Looking at broader skills based on each task (a corresponds to a and so on):
 - a. Communication & Questioning.
 - b. Listening & Note-taking.
 - c. Planning & Time Management.
 - d. Database Usage & Reading Comprehension.
 - e. Outlining & Organization.
 - f. Printing or Computer Skills.
 - g. Revising & Drafting.
 - h. Collaboration, Feedback Giving, & Accepting Criticism.
 - i. Essay Writing & Quality Assessment.
 - j. Meeting Deadlines & Understanding Requirements.

As you can see, as a student you practice and develop many transferable skills that will be great for the workplace. Your degree program will also teach you the hard skills needed for your chosen industry. This method can also be used outside of the context of education. Your work experience, volunteer work, projects, and even hobbies have taught you many different skills in all types.

Formatting the Skills Section

Now that you know the different types of skills and can identify your own, it is important to look at formatting the skills section. First there will be formatting guidelines, then general tips for creating the section, and finally examples.

Guidelines

- Aim for about 5-10 relevant skills if you are just listing them, or about 5 if you are going to provide bullet points.

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- This applies to hybrid and chronological resumes. For functional resumes, do a 5-10 with 2-5 bullet points since the focus in a functional resume is your skills section.
- Skills do not need much more than a title and description if you want to include them.
 - In functional resumes of course, you want to provide examples and context for your skills.
- A two column list is acceptable and does look good, especially if you are trying to conserve space.

Tips

- Try to match the desired skills in the job description, or at least ensure they are relevant to the job.
 - Try to use the exact wording.
- Be as specific as possible about your skills.
- Make sure you have a mix of the four types of skills as much as possible.
- Research the employer to get more ideas about skills they value.
 - Check their mission statement, framework, and values.
- Do not exaggerate or lie about your skills.
 - Do the honesty check, read it over when you are done.
- Use numbers and facts to back-up your skills if you are writing about them.
- Do not use overcomplicated or extra words to fill your resume.
- Do not use obsolete skills.
 - You are probably not working with floppy disks or Windows XP.
- Do not be vague and be cautious of 'buzzwords.'
- Consider not listing skills everyone should have unless the position specifically requests it.
 - Most people can operate Office 365 and use Gmail.
- Do not use skills you are still learning or are hoping to learn.
- Your work experience should be related to your skills and provide context for them.

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Example 1:

Skills

Planning.
Public speaking.
Editing.
Outlining.
Grant Writing.

Database Usage.
Archival Techniques.
Organizing.
Teamwork.
Time Management

Example 2:

Skills

Planning.
Public speaking.
Editing.
Outlining.
Grant Writing.
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Time Management.

Example 3:

Skills

Planning

- Wrote proposals and discussed with potential sponsors resulting in over \$15 000 of sponsorships.
- Worked with the marketing team to design an advertising campaign.
- Coordinated the logistics of multiple events to ensure all parts worked together.
- Provided on-site support during 20 different events.

Public Speaking

- Spoke to groups of more than 100 people.
- Wrote and drafted speeches.
- Prepared for and answered questions from presentees.