Reviewing your skills

Being able to identify your skills, demonstrate them and persuade others that you have them are key to making successful applications for work or further study.

Employers and course providers will know what they’re looking for in an ideal candidate. It’s your job to demonstrate that you can apply your skills to the opportunity.

Knowing what skills you have can also help you think about your career options and inform choices that are matched to what you’re good at and enjoy doing. Likewise, knowing what skills you need for a particular sector or role can help you develop them and give you the edge in a competitive industry.

This worksheet helps you assess, identify and evidence your skills. It offers a list of competencies to aid your reflection and helps you to audit your own skillset.
Identifying and evidencing your skills

Transferable skills are skills that you build in one context and can apply to another situation.

When you write an application or attend an interview, you need to demonstrate that you have the required skills and can apply them to the opportunity. In order to do this, you need to be able to identify and evidence your skills.

Identifying communication skills – an example

The ability to communicate effectively is a good example of a skill that is highly sought by employers.

Identify the skill
You may have learned to communicate effectively in a range of settings e.g. your studies, work or volunteering, student societies, sport or music, family life.

Evidence your skill
Think about where you developed your communication skills and what type of communicating you’ve done.
You might have learnt to get across complex ideas in writing on your course, as well as during a summer job.
Think about who you were communicating with, what medium you were using (speech, writing), and the purpose of the communication.

You can add some of your own skills examples into the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>• Wrote demanding essays for degree (consistent 2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Compiled reports for summer job as a business analyst intern (presented to Board)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When you’re gathering your evidence for a particular skill, make notes on when you’ve performed well, such as positive feedback from an employer or a good mark in academic work.

Thinking about your skills

If you’re not sure what skills you have, the skills listed below can help you to identify your areas of strength.

Note any additional categories or skills that are important to you or the employers you’re interested in.

Interpersonal skills

• Building relationships
• Co-ordinating
• Coaching
• Being approachable
• Leading
• Influencing
• Networking
• Dealing with conflict
• Advising
• Constructive criticism
• Co-operating
• Learning from others
• Negotiating
• Persuading
• Mentoring

Communication skills

• Clarity of expression
• Clarifying
• Reflecting
• Drafting and editing
• Questioning
• Giving and receiving feedback
• Talking appropriately
• Articulate speech
• Drafting and editing
• Writing appropriately
• Expressing ideas, feelings, opinions, judgements
• Listening

Self-management skills

• Personal planning
• Punctuality
• Awareness of external factors
• Time management
• Preparedness
• Developing self-confidence
• Assertiveness
• Managing stress
• Self-evaluation
• Self-awareness
• Self-discipline
• Being calm under pressure
• Taking initiative
• Self-motivation

Planning and organisational skills

• Setting goals
• Time management
• Facilitating the work of others
• Monitoring progress
• Initiating
• Delegating
• Decision making
• Collecting data
• Managing resources

Creative

• Developing new ideas
• Lateral thinking
• Creating new designs
• Building on others’ ideas
• Avoiding conventions
• Forming hypotheses

Cognitive

• Numerical reasoning
• Investigating
• Analysing complex verbal data
• Using information effectively
• Observing
• Learning new skills/information
• Solving problems
• Applying judgement
• Assessing

Doing your own skills audit

Writing a comprehensive list of your skills can help you to identify and evidence them. It will take time to develop a comprehensive list, so you might find it helpful to create a document that you can update as you develop new skills or find more evidence for existing ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>• Led a team of bar staff effectively in summer job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contributed to group project on course which gained a 1st</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Think about what you like doing as well as what you’re good at. Look at your skills audit and see which skills you enjoy using the most. You will want to emphasise these in an application if you can.
Using your skills audit

Once you’ve built up your list of skills, you can use it wherever you’re at with your career planning.

Choosing a career path
Look at some job profiles on the Prospects website and compare the skills mentioned there with your strengths.

Entering a particular career or sector
Assess whether you’re likely to be successful in entering a particular career. See how closely your list matches the skills mentioned in job adverts or the Prospects job profiles.

Applying for jobs or further study
Your skills audit can form a source document for your applications. Whether you are writing a CV, cover letter, or application form, you can show how your skills match the requirements of the university or employer.

Preparing for interviews
Use your list to prepare by anticipating how to answer questions about the competencies needed for the job or course.

Useful resources

Applying for jobs: www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/applyingforjobs
Prospects career profiles: www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles
Sector guides: www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/researchingcareers
Skills: www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/yourskills