Skills, abilities and qualities

When you apply for a job, your potential employer assesses your application to see whether you have the right experience, skills and abilities to do the job well. It might be that they're looking for you to have done a similar role before, or it might be that they're looking to see your potential to pick up a new challenge. Don't forget – whatever you tell them should be backed up by an example of when you've used the skill or ability you're talking about.

What are **transferable skills?**

Transferable skills can be developed in one place (eg at school) and used in another, like a workplace. Rather than being specific to a particular job or course, they are the skills you need to succeed in any workplace or education environment. They showcase your potential as well as your ability to do a job. Some transferable skills will be more important than others in different careers, and you'll be able to tell from the job description which ones are really key.

Skills matrix

Sometimes you might know you have certain skills, but aren't sure how to evidence them. Here are some possible examples you might be able to use:

They're asking for...	I have...
Communication skills	▸ Worked with members of the public, treating everyone with respect and making sure they understand things ▸ Looked after a social media account for an organisation ▸ Provided a warm welcome for customers, being friendly and approachable ▸ Written assignments, essays or reports ▸ Ensured my colleagues were updated on the progress of my work so they could factor it into their planning
Interpersonal skills	▸ Supported customers to find the best service/product for them, their budget and lifestyle ▸ Worked as part of a team to achieve shared goals, either at work, while volunteering or while studying ▸ Supervised other people and helped them to do their best work
Leadership skills	▸ Suggested new ways of working that help everyone be more effective in their role ▸ Organised rotas or schedules, taking health and safety into consideration and making sure services were covered ▸ Mentored or trained new members of staff ▸ Arranged or volunteered at an event for charity ▸ Chaperoned a school trip or event ▸ Led a group project on a course
Digital skills	▸ Taken a course or have a qualification in ICT or computing ▸ Used Microsoft Office programmes ▸ Used a customer relationship management (CRM) or call logging software ▸ Looked after a social media account ▸ Provided technical support for customers ▸ Helped to set up an elderly relative or neighbour with technology
Organisational skills	▸ Managed a diary or calendar of appointments ▸ Been responsible for multiple points of contact – for example, email, phone and in-person ▸ Taken minutes or arranged meetings ▸ Arranged an event or helped with logistics like fundraising, booking venues or inviting people

Abilities

For some roles, the employer might need you to have a set of abilities that mean you are already able to do the job. These will be specific to the job you're applying for – so if you're applying for a job as a computer technician, they might want to know that you can troubleshoot basic issues. If you're applying to be an electrician, they'll need to know you can rewire a socket. How many abilities you're expected to have will depend on the level of the job you're applying for – if you're applying for an entry level role, they won't expect you to hit the ground running on your first day.

Qualities

In addition to your skills and abilities, an employer wants to know what kind of person you are. Are you friendly? Can you be flexible in different situations? How do you cope under pressure? It's good to include these qualities when talking about your skills and abilities so they can paint a picture of how great you'd be to work with.

I am...

▸ Flexible	▸ Conscientious	▸ Dedicated	▸ Efficient
▸ Adaptable	▸ Punctual	▸ Diligent	▸ A fast learner
▸ Friendly	▸ Committed	▸ Hard working	▸ Enthusiastic
▸ Polite			