

Soft skills

Soft skills are transferable skills so they can be used in many different types of jobs and they enable you to be adaptable and flexible. You gain these skills from previous jobs, projects, voluntary work, sport, your home life, hobbies, and interests.

Don't underestimate examples from situations out of the workplace – if you've got kids you'll be used to managing your time, working under pressure, being creative and communicating well. Likewise with your school, college or university work, you'll have used many of these skills.

Communicating

Skilled communicators get along well with colleagues, listen and understand instructions, and put their point across without being aggressive. They can change their style of communication to suit the task in hand – this can be invaluable in many different situations, from handling conflict to trying to persuade a customer of the benefits of buying your product.

Making decisions

There are different styles of decision making, but the important thing is to be decisive. Gathering all the important facts, seeking advice, looking at the big picture, considering alternatives, being aware of repercussions – these are all things that go into making a good decision.

Showing commitment

Employers want people who are dependable, reliable, enthusiastic, and enjoy hard work. Employees that are committed need very little supervision or motivation to do their best and get the job done.

Flexibility

It's a great asset if you are able to step outside your comfort zone and try your hand at something you haven't done before. Employers like people who are positive, upbeat and have a 'can-do' attitude.

Time management

Good time management is about prioritizing the most important tasks, and then deciding which actions will produce the maximum output with the minimum effort.

Leadership skills

People with these skills are those who lead by example, constantly look to improve, motivate themselves, are positive, and know when to follow instructions and when to show initiative.

Creativity and problem-solving skills

The ability to apply both logic and creativity to solve problems is highly valued by employers. If you are the kind of person who tries to see the solution as well as the problem, this will stand you in good stead.

Being a team player

Good team players have the team goals clear in their mind and work with others to achieve them. They are open and honest, and offer constructive suggestions and listen to others.

Accepting responsibility

Employers are on the lookout for people who take pride in their work, and are confident enough to put their name to it. They also respect people who can hold their hands up when things go wrong, and don't pass the buck. Everyone makes mistakes - it's how you react and learn from them that counts.

Ability to work under pressure

When working to a deadline you need to focus on the job in hand and put the stress to one side. Can you decide quickly which approach will achieve the maximum results in a short period of time, and then get the job done?

Ability to motivate people

Being genuinely interested in people's responses and involving them builds self-esteem. Minimize ambiguity by communicating clearly. People are not de-motivated by certainty, but by uncertainty. It is important to appreciate people's achievements in public, but to reprimand in private. Know how to build people's strengths and help them eliminate their weaknesses.