



# Employability skills – definitions

Employability skills – you may also see them referred to as ‘soft skills’, ‘competencies’, key behaviours’, ‘strengths’ or ‘transferable skills – but whichever word or term is used, here are some common key skill definitions to help you.

This list is not exhaustive and for every skill shown here, you will undoubtedly find it described in a slightly different way. So, use these definitions as a guide. This list is in alphabetical order rather than in any particular order of importance. Some skills may be more important for particular jobs or in particular sectors.

Skill / competency	Definition
Commercial awareness	Put simply, this is <b>thinking with a business brain</b> and it really impresses a potential employer. Commercial awareness is also important when you apply for a job. Do your homework. Ask some key questions: what sector is the employer in; who are their competitors; who are their customers; have they featured in the news recently? What outside factors might affect their business or industry? It's important to keep up to date with news headlines, business trends and to understand how local, national or world events can affect a business and the decisions that a business might have to make.
Team working	This involves you being able to work confidently and proactively in a <b>group</b> of people. It includes how you interact and co-operate with different people and in different situations, and how effectively you do this. Working within a group can involve setting goals, making plans, reaching agreement, taking decisions, negotiating responsibilities, active listening, persuasion, completing tasks and achieving actions together.
Written communication	Being able to express yourself in <b>writing</b> in a style that is clear, concise and appropriate for the situation. This is about being able to communicate your thoughts in logical way that is easy to understand for your audience. Use good grammar, correct punctuation, good sentence construction and clear formatting so your writing is accurate, easy to read and appropriate in tone for the audience with whom you are communicating.
Verbal communication	Being able to express yourself clearly in <b>speech</b> . This is not about regional accents, but it is about being clear in your thoughts and logical in the way you express these to others. You may need to use different styles of verbal communication depending on the seniority of the person you are talking to, so understanding how to speak to others is vitally important.
Initiative / self-reliance	This involves being able to work on your own and <b>act on your own initiative</b> without being asked. It involves identifying opportunities and being proactive in suggesting ideas and solutions. You'll need to demonstrate you have the willingness to learn, ability to think for yourself, consider the outcomes of your decision-making, take responsibility for your decisions or actions as well as develop yourself without being told what you need to do.

	While working under your own initiative you must behave with integrity, professionalism and within any legal, ethical and professional requirements.
Problem-solving	This involves being able to gather and consider information in a <b>logical and methodical</b> way to establish the facts and principles. You should be able to analyse, investigate and interpret what you've discovered, consider all the practical or feasible options, arrive at a clear decision for the best solution(s) or recommendation(s) to help solve the problem. You may also need to implement your solutions yourself or find the correct teams/person to help put your solutions into practice.
Planning and organisation	You need to be able to <b>consider, plan and organise</b> activities and carry them out to meet/achieve an end goal in a logical, effective way and in good time. This could also involve being able to effectively prioritise your own activities or those of a group. It may involve you planning and organising other individuals, planning and organising finances /budgets etc.
Numeracy	You'll need to be <b>confident with numbers</b> and be able to multiply and divide accurately, calculate percentages, use statistics and a calculator, interpret graphs and tables.
Motivation and drive	This is closely linked to initiative and self-reliance (see above). You should be prepared to show that you are <b>determined</b> to get things done, that you make things happen and are constantly looking for better ways of doing things.
Flexibility	You'll need to be able to <b>adapt successfully</b> to changing circumstances, situations and environments. In today's constantly changing business world, this is an increasingly important skill.
Creativity	Creativity is about being able to show inventive or original thought processes as well as to generate and apply <b>new ideas and solutions</b> .
Decision-making	This skill involves determining the <b>best course of action</b> . It includes evaluating options based on logic and fact and presenting solutions. You'll need to be equally confident at decision-making whether in a highly pressured or more relaxed environment.
Leadership	This involves being able to <b>motivate and enthuse</b> others to follow your example, actions or requests. You'll need to consider others and understand how to get the best out of people in a variety of different circumstances.

This list is not exhaustive and you may well find some of these skills described slightly differently elsewhere.