

HOBART
AND
WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES
The Salisbury Center for Career Services

IDENTIFYING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Written by Rosita Smith

<http://www.placementmanual.com/career/career-11.html>

If you are wondering what skills you have that would interest a potential employer, you are not alone. Many college seniors feel that four (or more) years of college have not sufficiently prepared them to begin work after graduation. Moreover, like these students, you may have carefully reviewed your work history (along with your campus and civic involvement) and you may still have a difficult time seeing how the skills you learned in college will transfer to the workplace.

However, keep in mind that you have been acquiring skills since childhood. Whether learning the value of teamwork by playing sports, developing editing skills working on your high school newspaper or developing countless skills while completing your coursework, each of your experiences has laid the groundwork for building additional skills.

What Are Transferable Skills?

A transferable skill is a 'portable skill' that you deliberately (or inadvertently, if you have not identified them yet) take with you to other life experiences.

Your transferable skills are often:

- Acquired through a class (e.g., an English major who is taught technical writing)
- Acquired through experience (e.g., the student government representative who develops strong motivation and consensus building skills)

Transferable skills supplement your degree. They provide an employer concrete evidence of your readiness and qualifications for a position. Identifying your transferable skills and communicating them to potential employers will greatly increase your success during the job search.

Remember that it is impossible to complete college without acquiring transferable skills. Campus and community activities, class projects and assignments, athletic activities, internships and summer/part-time jobs have provided you with countless experiences where you have acquired a range of skills and many that you may take for granted.

Identifying Transferable Skills

While very closely related (and with some overlap), transferable skills can be divided into three subsets:

- Working with people
- Working with things
- Working with information and data

For example, some transferable skills can be used in every workplace setting (e.g., organizing or public speaking) while some are more applicable to specific settings (e.g., drafting or accounting).

The following are examples of skills often acquired through the classroom, jobs, athletics and other activities. Use these examples to help you develop your own list of the transferable skills you have acquired.

Working With People

- Selling - Training - Teaching - Supervising
- Organizing - Soliciting - Motivating - Mediating
- Advising - Delegating - Entertaining
- Representing - Negotiating - Translating

Working With Things

- Repairing - Assembling parts - Designing
- Operating machinery - Driving
- Maintaining equipment - Constructing - Building
- Sketching - Working with CAD - Keyboarding
- Drafting - Surveying - Troubleshooting

Working With Data/Information

- Calculating - Developing databases
- Working with spreadsheets- Accounting - Writing
- Researching - Computing- Testing - Filing - Sorting
- Editing - Gathering data- Analyzing - Budgeting

Easy Steps to Identify Your Transferable Skills

Now that you know what transferable skills are, let us put together a list of your transferable skills. You may want to work with someone in your career services office to help you identify as many transferable skills as possible.

Step 1. Make a list of every job title you have ever held (part-time, full-time and internships), along with volunteer, sports and other affiliations since starting college. (Be sure to record officer positions and other leadership roles).

Step 2. Using your transcript, list the classes in your major field of study along with foundation courses. Include electives that may be related to your employment interests.

Step 3. For each job title, campus activity and class you have just recorded, write a sentence and then underline the action taken. (Avoid stating that you learned or gained experience in any skill. Instead, present your skill more directly as a verifiable qualification.)

'While working for Jones Engineering, I performed 3D modeling and drafting.'

NOT 'While working for Jones Engineering, I gained experience in 3D modeling and drafting.'

'As a member of the Caribbean Students Association, I developed and coordinated the marketing of club events.'

NOT 'As a member of the Caribbean Students Association, I learned how to market events.'

Step 4. Using Transferable Skills in the Job Search

Your success in finding the position right for you will depend on your ability to showcase your innate talents and skills. You will also need to demonstrate how you can apply these skills at an employer's place of business. Consult the staff at your career services office to help you further identify relevant transferable skills and incorporate them on your resume and during your interviews. During each interview, be sure to emphasize only those skills that would be of particular interest to a specific employer. Transferable skills are the foundation upon which you will build additional, more complex skills as your career unfolds. Start making your list of skills and you will discover that you have more to offer than you realized!

Additional Tips to Help Identify Your Transferable Skills

1. Review your list of transferable skills with someone in your field(s) of interest to help you identify any additional skills that you may want to include.
2. Using a major job posting Web site, print out descriptions of jobs that interest you to help you identify skills being sought. (Also, use these postings as guides for terminology on your resume.)
3. Attend career fairs and company information sessions to learn about the skills valued by specific companies and industries.