

Identifying Your Skills

Think about how you react when someone congratulates you on a job well done. Do you look them in the eye and say, “Thanks, you’re right, I AM good at that!” Chances are, you don’t! Growing up, we’re taught to be modest and to downplay our assets and skills. We’re bashful about stating our accomplishments and fail to mention our strengths. The problem is, if **you** don’t mention your skills to an employer...who will?

It’s important to reframe your thinking and examine your personal skill set so that you can make reference to it when necessary. The first step in recognizing the skills you hold is through learning about the three types of skill sets. Once you understand each of these categories, you will be able to better identify and discuss your own personal skill set on your resume, in your job search, and during an interview. The three types of skills are: job content skills, self-management skills, and transferable skills.

Job Content Skills	Self-Management Skills	Transferable Skills
Job content skills are related to job-specific tools and tasks. They usually have a vocabulary of their own. Technical skills rarely transfer from job to job because they are too specific.	Self-management skills are personality traits which help an employer decide if your temperament suits a particular job. Development of these skills is an individual initiative.	Transferable skills are common to a number of jobs and can be adapted to a particular employer's need. Transferable skills are learned in one environment but can be used in any given number of job settings.
<i>Example:</i> In her work-study job, Susan became familiar with a database used for storing student information. Knowledge of this program is job-specific and may not transfer to her next position as a consultant.	<i>Example:</i> Tim is very calm and easy to talk to. Friends always come to him when they need advice. This self-management skill (good listening) will be useful in his future career as a nurse.	<i>Example:</i> Jen is the president of her sorority and she’s gained conflict management, leadership, and presentation skills. These transferable skills would undoubtedly be easily transferred to her first job as a teacher.

Thinking Outside the Box: When you’re identifying your unique skills for use on a resume or in a cover letter, remember to think beyond the obvious places such as your previous internships or jobs (although you’re likely to gain great skills from these). Very important skills may have been developed through leadership positions you’ve held, clubs you’ve participated in, volunteer projects you’ve headed up, or class projects you’ve lead. Often these skills can make you a perfect match for an employer or a job!