

# Transferable Skills

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## What are Transferable Skills?

As a graduate searching for employment, you will likely come across the term **transferable skills** and wonder what's meant by this. This is a specific set of skills that don't belong to a particular niche, industry or job; they are general skills that can be transferred between jobs, departments and industries (hence the name).

Employers often value these skills because they can be used in so many ways in the workplace. Transferable skills are those that you develop as you progress through employment, education or training. **Communication**, **problem solving** and **teamwork** are all examples of transferable skills because they can be used in any employed role, your education or vocational training.

As such, it is important that you emphasize your transferable skills throughout your application documents and during your interview. These skills can go a long way to persuading a potential employer that you are the perfect fit for their company, even if you don't necessarily have the experience.

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Transferable skills are the tools you'll need to adapt to any new job.

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## The Importance of Transferable Skills

If you want to secure a graduate opportunity, you are going to have to demonstrate a specific set of skills needed for the role. Some of these skills will be specific to the industry while others (transferable skills) are those that you can build on and develop throughout your career.

Transferable skills tend to bring the following benefits for candidates and employers:

- **Flexibility.** In an increasingly competitive jobs market, companies want to recruit employees who can diversify and complete multiple tasks and roles. When you have a diverse skill set, this will set you apart from the other applicants and shows you have greater flexibility.

- **Diversity.** The more transferable skills you have, the more diversity you can offer to a potential employer. The experiences that you have had during your studies, work experience or academic projects have all allowed you to develop a range of skills, many of which can be put to good use in any role.
- **Portability.** The nature of transferable skills means they can be taken with you when you move jobs. As you progress, the skills that you currently have will improve and you will also gain new ones too.
- **Employability.** Even if you have very little work experience, building a strong [CV](#) around your transferable skills will strengthen your chances of success. Although you may not have direct work experience, these transferable skills will demonstrate that you can adapt to new demands.

# The Top 10 Transferable Skills for Graduates

A complete list of transferable skills is beyond the scope of this article, so we've put together a list of the ten we consider most important. Without further ado:

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## 1) Business Strategy

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Understanding **business strategy** is a fundamental skill, whether you are joining a small business or a large corporation. The term business strategy is used to describe a set of actions, plans and goals concerning how the business intends to compete in a particular market with a specific product or service offering.

Developing a business strategy and implementing it is certainly not easy, but understanding what is required to achieve this is the key. This transferable skill is about understanding how to put together a strategy which involves careful planning, knowledge of the market and defining organizational goals. These skills would be beneficial in any role, from sales through to finance.

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## 2) Leadership and Team Management

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Effective **leadership and management** involves taking charge and motivating others to achieve specific goals on an individual, team and company level. Possessing **leadership** and team management skills will mean that you can effectively manage groups and delegate responsibilities, plan and coordinate a variety of tasks, solve problems and resolve conflict, make and implement decisions and coach others.

These skills don't necessarily have to be workplace-related. They can be acquired through a group project at university, a period of work experience or time spent carrying out voluntary work.

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## 3) Problem Solving

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Every business encounters issues and if you can demonstrate your ability to **solve problems**, this will be a major bonus for your application. Some problems are easier to solve than others and often they relate to the achievement of goals and the barriers that prevent these goals from being achieved.

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## 4) Teamwork Ability

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**Collaborative working** is a must for any organization. Employers want to see their staff work together toward the achievement of common goals. **Effective teamwork** involves sharing credit and accepting responsibility for your own work, being receptive to the ideas and suggestions of your colleagues, building rapport with staff across all areas of the business and

establishing effective communication channels to avoid duplicated work, mistakes or other problems.

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## 5) Data Analysis

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Being able to **analyse data** is a key task in many different businesses. From identifying patterns to understanding customer metrics, the ability to evaluate information effectively will contribute in some way to the business.

The complexity of this analysis will depend on the company and the specific role, but an aptitude for interpreting information, extracting results and developing reports is a valuable transferable skill. An employee should be able to use databases to collect data, analyse it and then interpret the information they have collected. Data collection and analysis is relevant to many different roles, from finance and IT through to marketing and sales.

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## 6) Communication Skills

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Being able to **communicate well** is perhaps one of the most basic employability skills. **Verbal communication** is about communicating clearly and concisely with others, whether it is a customer or colleague. In the world of work you will be required to present information to a range of audiences both inside and outside the business. Not all of these people will have an understanding of your work, so being able to communicate with clarity, articulating your ideas in a logical, organized and effective way is important.

**Written communication** is also important. Good writing skills are as important as being able to speak to someone clearly. Many employees will be asked to prepare reports and explain specific information about products, services and business operations. The majority of written communications are created to encourage the reader to take some form of

action, so you must be able to demonstrate a natural ability to write persuasively and engage the reader.

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## 7) Time Management

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**Time management** is a way in which you organize and plan your time to carry out specific activities. Effective time management boosts productivity, meaning that you can complete more work in less time, even when you are working under pressure. Good time management is about planning your day, minimizing distractions and carrying out regular reviews to make sure that you are making progress.

A significant factor in time management is prioritization, and it is only with practice that you can learn to prioritize your tasks more effectively, focusing on the most urgent tasks rather than less important activities.

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## 8) Work Ethic

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Having a **strong work ethic** is often part of your own values. It is based on a personal understanding of taking pride in your work because you want to, rather than the rewards that you may receive.

Demonstrating a positive approach to work and being honest - as well as taking the initiative and caring about your co-workers - are all factors that convey a strong work ethic. In addition, learning new skills, showing a commitment to your employer and being responsible for your own work even when things don't go as you planned, all illustrate a good work ethic.

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## 9) Commercial Awareness

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Showing that you understand the marketplace in which your employer operates, as well as knowing what makes a business successful, is a key requirement in many jobs and even more important when applying for graduate vacancies. Once appointed you will be able to offer a more tailored level of customer service and support the business better if you demonstrate keen **commercial awareness**. This could include:

- Fully understand the company's mission and aims
- Demonstrating your knowledge of the sector and your awareness of the economic and political issues that affect the business
- Knowing who the major competitors are
- Understanding the commercial priorities of the business

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## 10) Listening and Providing Feedback

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**Listening** is the ability to understand and interpret messages and it is key to all successful communication. Poor listening skills result in a breakdown in communication, as well as irritation or frustration. Better listening skills - and consequent feedback - can boost service delivery, increase productivity and create better information sharing.

## Which Jobs Require Transferable Skills?

Although transferable skills may be role-related, many of them can be used in a range of different industries. Below we've looked at which transferable skills are most likely to be preferred for three different industries.

### Transferable Skills in Retail

Among the most desired transferable skills for the retail sector are communication, customer service and teamwork.

### Transferable Skills in Management

General management skills are highly sought after, as a good manager will be able to transfer easily between sectors. The key skill that can be

transferred to different roles is leadership. An individual who can demonstrate the ability to lead, manage and motivate a team would be highly desirable to any recruiter.

## Transferable Skills in Not For Profit

Within this sector, skills such as problem solving, communication, data analysis and teamwork are essential. Possessing any of these skills would be useful when dealing with large organizations or a diverse range of individuals, from local community organizations through to corporate decision-makers.

## Emphasizing Transferable Skills In Your CV Or Interview

Once you have identified what transferable skills you have, ensure that you incorporate them into your **CV**. If you have very little work experience, then a functional **CV** focused on your skills rather than your experience would be more effective.

Demonstrate how you used your skills in a specific scenario - giving a brief synopsis of the situation, what you did and the outcome. Try to make your **CV achievements focused**. Strategically place transferable skills throughout your **CV**, including in a brief professional summary section which describes you, your skills and your qualities in about six to seven lines at the top of the **CV**. This is designed to catch the attention of the recruiter and encourage them to read further.

When it comes to the **interview**, you can expand on your **CV** in more detail, providing specific examples of when you demonstrated commercial awareness or solved a problem. It's one thing saying that you have a specific skill - demonstrating that you can use it effectively is very important.