Understanding the skills or competencies recruiters are looking for is vital when it comes to making successful applications and doing well in interviews. By giving examples to show that you have the skills they require, you are more likely to convince them of your ability to do the job.

How do you know which skills employers are looking for?

Start with the job advert. It might say “we’re looking for a hard working Accounts Officer to join our busy team”. Here ‘hard working’ indicates they want someone who is committed and determined, and ‘busy team’ infers the candidate is likely to need to be a good team worker.

Looking at the job description and person specification will explain the skills they are looking for. If you see an “E” or “Essential” listed next to a specific skill, it means you must have this, so need to evidence it clearly in your application. “D” is for Desirable – try to cover these too in your application as it could set you apart from another candidate.

Have you got the skills employers are looking for?

Most probably. It’s important to think about your skills before you start job hunting. Looking at a job description and seeing the word “leadership skills required” can be daunting. But, you don’t have to be the President of the History Society, or a supervisor at work in order to have gained leadership skills.

Think through your experiences carefully when you look at skills required in a role. For example, if you helped a group reach a decision when completing group coursework, or have taken the initiative to fundraise – this would require skills for leadership, such as careful communication, listening, focus and patience. Providing you have some volunteering, work experience and extra curricular activities, you are very likely to be able to answer the question above with a confident “yes”.

If you don’t have work experience on your CV, make an appointment with your Careers Consultant – it’s never too late!

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How do you show employers you have them?

First it is important to understand what is meant by each of the skills the recruiter is looking for. Then think of ways to provide them with specific evidence to show that you have these skills.

The table on the next page gives some examples of how you could do this. It explains the general meaning behind particular skills and shows ways of providing evidence of this skill in your application. Some organisations might provide their own definition of a certain skill so it fits with their business context. If so, use their definition.

To understand how to fully express an example in an application form or a CV, see our ‘How to write applications’ leaflet where the STAR approach is explained. This is a great way to structure your examples in an application form. You can also use this technique for your CV and to structure answers at interview.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>What does this mean</th>
<th>Example of evidence</th>
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| Written and verbal communication | • communicating information and ideas clearly and accurately.  
• keeping your writing fresh and succinct.  
• using appropriate language, style and writing methods when communicating with people depending on the situation.  
• anticipating what information will be needed by others. | Guest journalist for Q Messenger: wrote article to raise awareness of the low contribution to the Global Fund to fight malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Demonstrated issues with photos and statistics, and gave clear instructions on what students could do to lobby for change. |
| Teamwork                      | • prioritising team goals over individual goals  
• encouraging co-operation  
• having an awareness of the needs of others and responding flexibly  
• sharing information and ideas, and supporting team members to achieve goals  
• assigning or taking on clear roles and responsibility within the team  
• doing what you say you will | Group coursework: offered to be the co-ordinator for the project. Encouraged each member to take on a piece of research and passed on information from tutor to the group. |
| Commercial awareness           | • knowing how to talk to clients, establish their needs and spot opportunities  
• understanding how an organisation works and what internal/external elements have an influence on its business  
• taking time to understand what is going on in your chosen industry | Asked manager at my part time retail job to spend a day at the Head Office in order to better understand how shop targets are set. Learned about negotiations with suppliers, the price of raw materials and the impact these both have on retail prices. |
| Attention to detail           | • Ensuring work is thoroughly checked without it being late  
• Following instructions carefully and accurately  
• Monitoring your work for errors | Writing a short article that contained statistics and data during a summer internship to a tight deadline. Planned extra time to allow for proofreading and checking. |
| Time management (organisation) | • Prioritising your workload when you have multiple deadlines  
• Planning time to ensure tasks are delivered to a high standard and on time | Managing a final year project, whilst having a part time job and volunteering project. Set monthly goals and tasks each week. |
| Adaptability and flexibility   | • Responding positively to change  
• Adapting to new situations quickly  
• Taking on a diverse range of tasks equally effectively | Taking on the role of team leader on a QM Provide volunteering project at the last minute. Spent own time researching the charity and project so I could organise the time effectively. |
### Leadership
- Leading a team
- Delegating and motivating effectively
- Encouraging input from others
- Putting the group’s or organisation’s needs ahead of your own

Leading and motivating a new tennis team to train on a weekend, and creating the post of Vice-Captain to support scheduling work, after consulting the rest of the team about scheduling problems.

### Customer focus / orientation
- Identifying customer needs and constraints
- Seeking to find out more about customers and provide a better service
- Delivering on promises

As a part time Sales Assistant, dealing with complaints professionally to ensure customer loyalty. Taking time to listen to their feedback and suggesting changes to supervisor.

### Interpersonal effectiveness
- Adapting your behaviour to build relationships with a wide range of people
- Influencing others through persuasion and encouragement

Persuading other team members to use your idea for a group project, by suggesting a discussion about the pros and cons of each option.

### Planning and organising
- Prioritising and planning the efficient use of resources
- Monitoring progress against objectives and responding to unforeseen events

As member of QM drama society, scheduling rehearsals, managing the budget and co-ordinating costume and set teams.

### Understanding skills to help you make career choices

Every job role requires a different set of technical and/or transferable skills. When you are choosing which job you would like to do, it is helpful to identify both your interests and your skills and see whether they fit well with those the job role typically requires.

For example, if you enjoy team work you probably want to avoid a job where you will do the majority of work on your own. If you tend to need time to think and process information, a job where you have to respond quickly to situations could be very draining.

If you can identify what skills you are particularly good at then, as you explore different types of job, you can see which roles maximise using your skills, that will suit you and you will enjoy.

Further resources for exploring your skills and related careers:
- Prospects planner
- Target Careers Report