

Skills & Competencies

Considering your current skills and strengths as well as areas for development can contribute to your career exploration research and reflections as well as the ways you market yourself to an employer.

Skills are sometimes categorized as hard / soft, technical / transferable, and most recently as “power” skills. Considering your own skills as well as how you are most interested in contributing and developing through your career can be productive ways to advance your career decision-making and self-marketing.

Types of Skills

Hard / Technical Skills: Skills related to technical abilities typically acquired through formal education – such as coding or product knowledge.¹

Soft / Transferable / Power Skills: Skills which are universal and not associated with a particular job or industry – such as communication, coachability, and collaboration.² These skills are increasingly sought-after by employers.

Researching Skills

Department of Labor (O*NET) Resources: O*NT OnLine is a comprehensive resource for career research. Each summary page about an occupation provides specific sections about technology skills, knowledge, skills, abilities and education trends and requirements. Use the “keyword” section at <https://www.onetonline.org/> to learn more.

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Data: The chart below is based on data from the NACE Job Outlook Reports. Within these reports, employers indicate the skills they are seeking within student resumes. The top five skills per year are highlighted. These aren’t the only important skills within a career, but the summaries offer ideas and guidance. Which of these skills do you offer already and which may be strategic to develop given your career / industry interests?

Attribute	2021 Report	2020 Report	2019 Report	2018 Report	2017 Report	2016 Report	2015 Report	2014 Report
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¹ Source: Source: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/https://blog.avilar.com/2021/06/16/understanding-durable-vs-perishable-skills-and-how-to-balance-them/>

² Source: Source: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/https://blog.avilar.com/2021/06/16/understanding-durable-vs-perishable-skills-and-how-to-balance-them/>

Ability to work in a team	81.0	86.3	78.7	82.9	78.0	78.9	77.8	71.4
Problem-solving skills	79.0	91.2	80.9	82.9	77.3	70.2	70.9	70.3
Analytical/quantitative skills	76.1	79.4	71.9	67.5	64.4	62.7	68.0	73.1
Communication skills (verbal)	73.2	69.6	67.4	67.5	70.5	68.9	67.0	68.6
Communication skills (written)	72.7	77.5	82.0	80.3	75.0	70.2	73.4	76.6
Leadership	67.8	72.5	67.4	72.6	68.9	80.1	77.8	76.0
Initiative	67.8	69.6	74.2	67.5	65.9	65.8	66.5	68.6
Technical skills	67.8	65.7	59.6	59.8	56.8	59.6	67.5	61.1
Flexibility/adaptability	65.9	62.7	58.4	60.7	63.6	60.9	62.1	59.4
Strong work ethic	65.4	80.4	70.8	68.4	72.0	68.9	70.4	72.0
Computer skills	59.0	54.9	55.1	48.7	49.2	55.3	62.6	62.9
Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)	57.6	62.7	52.8	54.7	58.3	58.4	60.6	58.3
Detail-oriented	56.1	67.6	59.6	64.1	62.1	52.8	57.6	65.7
Organizational ability	39.0	47.1	43.8	48.7	47.7	48.4	42.4	42.9
Creativity	29.8	23.5	23.6	29.1	21.2	23.6	18.2	21.7
Strategic planning skills	28.3	45.1	38.2	39.3	37.9	26.7	35.0	33.7
Friendly/outgoing personality	25.9	29.4	22.5	27.4	25.8	35.4	29.1	32.6
Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker	19.5	24.5	16.9	19.7	19.7	18.6	25.1	23.4
Tactfulness	17.6	24.5	25.8	22.2	25.8	20.5	23.2	22.9
Fluency in a foreign language	3.4	2.9	11.2	4.3	4.5			

Career Readiness Competencies: NACE outlines eight “core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management.”³³ Through research with employers and career services professionals from across the country, NACE members identified eight Career Readiness Competencies.

- **Career & Self Development:** Proactively develop oneself and one’s career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one’s organization.
- **Communication:** Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.

³³ <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>

- **Critical Thinking:** Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.
- **Equity & Inclusion:** Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.
- **Leadership:** Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.
- **Professionalism:** Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.
- **Teamwork:** Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.
- **Technology:** Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Marquette Professional Formation Competencies: Career staff across the Marquette community considered the NACE competencies as well as the learning experiences and values that make a Marquette University education unique and developed the MU Professional Formation Competences.

Developing Skills & Competencies

Skills can be developed within a variety of contexts. Employers align their expectations of applicants with the applicant's background. For example, skill development expectations of a sophomore will be different than those for a mid-career professional. However, the majority of employers are looking for students to demonstrate initiative in to learn new things and develop / deepen skills. As you brainstorm ways you have developed skills or could develop further, consider opportunities including:

- Internships, part-time jobs and full-time positions
- Class projects
- Student, community or professional organizations
- Class projects
- Community service
- Independent learning: LinkedIn Learning, Courcera, YouTube videos, etc.