

# How to identify and demonstrate your skills

Your resume is not the place to be modest! It is usually the initial and is sometimes the only opportunity you have to create a positive impression and will be the thing that gets you an interview – or not. The trick is to establish a strong sense of what you have to offer without being boastful and making grand, empty claims. The way to achieve your goal of impressing employers and making them want to meet you is to back up your claims with hard evidence. Don't just say you are good at something; provide examples to show you are.

Therefore, the most effective resumes are those that have a strong **Skills** section beginning on page one. Place it after your personal details and your statement of career objectives. Use much of the detail you might otherwise have put under **Employment** as the evidence of what you have done. Past experience and application of skills is a good indicator for employers of your potential abilities and actions. This focuses attention on what you can do, have done and are likely to do without readers having to wade through a lot of detail about various jobs and activities in order to work it out.

It is a good idea to back up your claim that you possess excellent skills in, for example, communication by giving specific examples of the particular form of communication you have used, where (context) and why (for what purpose and for whom). Try to start each bulleted point with a verb to emphasise real life experience. Follow with an example from work, study or extra-curricular activities. For example, your skills section might look like this:

## Skills

### Communication

- Presented reports to tutorial group of 20 about research findings in Economics
- Wrote articles for university magazine about bushwalking club activities
- Liaised with customers of various backgrounds at Coles Supermarket as part-time cashier for 3 years

### Teamwork

- Co-operatively planned work schedules with four staff at Rebel Sports
- Negotiated with colleagues regarding task allocation for major projects at university
- Played an active role in attaining customer service goals at Coles

## What skills do you have?

If you are really not sure, as opposed to being modest, perhaps you could ask friends, family and tutors or speak to a careers counsellor. A personal skills audit might suggest the following. Note sub-sections of the major skill areas and use them as a guide to the bullet points you could include.

### Communication

Presenting information and ideas in written form

Editing

Giving and receiving feedback

Explaining

Active listening and asking clarifying questions

Expressing ideas, feelings and opinions

Speaking fluently and accurately

Foreign language competence

Persuading and influencing

Negotiating

Non-verbal communication

## **Flexibility**

Attitude to new tasks  
Readiness to change  
Enthusiasm  
Ability to transfer skills

Commitment to ongoing improvement  
Desire to learn new skills  
Acceptance of constructive criticism

## **Teamwork**

Ability to work co-operatively  
Delegating skills  
Constructive confrontation and resolution  
Empathising  
Recognising and valuing difference

## **Resilience**

Coping with uncertainty  
Dealing with difficult people  
Ability to work under pressure  
Ability to set and achieve goals

## **Assertiveness**

Decision making Problem solving  
Independence  
Leadership  
Level of ambition  
Inclination to initiate ideas and plans

## **Entrepreneurship**

Self-promotion  
Ability to create opportunities  
Networking skills  
Customer focus  
Business acumen

Some of these sub-headings could be major skills themselves, such as Negotiating and Leadership. Some elements may fit under more than one skill. You will have to make choices about how best to use your material. Be guided by the Key Selection Criteria for specific jobs as your aim is to show how your skills fit with the employer's needs.

When describing your skills, it is possible to 'value-add' by making reference to aspects of your experience and your personal qualities, interests and values. This can provide a lot of information about you in a very brief and concise way. For example, 'Wrote articles for university magazine about bushwalking club activities' informs readers about your interest, skill and success in writing as well as your active, healthy and sociable lifestyle. These are highly valued traits in the workplace and they have been communicated efficiently and effectively.