



SHOWCASE YOUR SKILLS

It's all about skills for employers these days. It pays to learn how to highlight yours to set yourself apart in the hiring process.

Skills are even more important than your major, according to a report commissioned by the Association of American Colleges. In fact, 91% of employers surveyed agreed that “a candidate’s demonstrated ability to think critically, communicate clearly and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major.”



Employers look for three types of skills:

1

HARD SKILLS

Techniques and abilities that are learned and teachable, such as mastery of a specific technology or software program. Examples include: data visualization, editing, coding, etc.

2

SOFT SKILLS

Abilities that are more human focused, intuitive and subjective, like communication, teamwork or creativity.

3

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Hard and soft skills that transfer easily from one environment (work, school, extracurricular activities, home) to another, such as leadership, organization, communication, and research.

Stay ahead of skills trends!

It's valuable to stay ahead of in-demand skills in your field. For example, almost anyone in Marketing or Social Media should build experience with Google Analytics. Some skills trends even cross all industries. In a recent survey of required skills for over 200,000 internships posted over the course of a year, “project management” was the top crossover skill across all job categories!

How to showcase your skills

Resume

Your resume is the principle means for selecting candidates for the interview stage, and recruiters increasingly are using ATS—Applicant Tracking System—technology (see our “Optimize Your Resume for ATS Software” handout) to automate the process. That means it’s important to use skill-focused keywords throughout, especially in role/job title wording, experience sections and accomplishment statements.

BEFORE

WORK EXPERIENCE Intern | Appleton Inc.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS Created report that outlined key findings on how to message brand identity through social media channels

BETTER! ✓

MARKETING EXPERIENCE Data Analysis Intern | Appleton Inc.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS Led [leadership] team of three to collect social media analytics, brainstorm [creativity, collaboration] new hashtags, problem solve [problem solving] barriers to digital engagement and designed [creativity] three campaigns focused on increasing brand awareness

Cover Letter

Your cover letter offers the opportunity to highlight key qualifications for the specific position in a narrative (as opposed to bullet-point) format. Present those qualifications in terms of skills, and remember to support your claims with examples or evidence. You can also showcase soft skills in this document by adding language like this:

BEFORE

QUALIFICATIONS I work well both independently and as a part of a team.

BETTER! ✓

QUALIFICATIONS As a Production Intern on a feature film, I managed daily schedules for a mix of contract and volunteer staff. This included scheduling breaks and providing film location information. I honed skills in project management, logistics and conflict management.

Interview

The interview will provide you with lots of opportunities to highlight (and provide evidence of) your skills. Each type of question can be used to showcase different skills.

Qualifications Questions focus more on hard skills and relevant experience.

Behavioral Questions are designed to assess your soft skills, typically creative problem solving, leadership, collaboration, conflict resolution and others.

Scenario Questions give you the opportunity to show your skills (like problem-solving) rather than just describe them.