

Succeed At Work

California Career



Resource Network



Getting a job, whether it's your first one or tenth, is not the end of the story. Now you have to succeed in your job—this guide is a roadmap to that success.

This guide focuses on job-related skills, also known as employability skills, that will help you be successful in any work setting.

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SELF-CARE

The most important skill you can develop is self-care. You need to stay healthy to work and your work can be exhausting. Pay attention to these areas so you'll be your best self at work:

- ◆ Physical energy
- ◆ Safety
- ◆ Mental health
- ◆ Support



Don't ignore taking care of yourself! One secret to your success is staying healthy—being healthy means staying on the job.

PHYSICAL ENERGY

It takes energy to do your job. Use these practices to build up and maintain your energy:

- ◆ Get plenty of sleep
- ◆ Drink plenty of water
- ◆ Get regular exercise—take the stairs, park further away or walk the long way to work
- ◆ Eat a healthy diet
- ◆ Keep healthy snacks nearby

SAFETY

Every job has physical demands whether you're working in an office, outside or in a warehouse. Protect yourself and your ability to work:

- ◆ Follow your employer's safety regulations—every job has different safety regulations
- ◆ Lift properly (if you don't know how, learn)
- ◆ Maintain proper posture
- ◆ Keep your work area clean and clutter free
- ◆ Get up and move around regularly—moving regularly is critical in maintaining your health

MENTAL HEALTH

Stress is a normal part of living. But when negativity impacts your health, work performance, or life, it has to be dealt with productively and effectively. Use these ideas to help reduce your stress:

- ◆ Take periodic breaks
- ◆ Eat healthy meals
- ◆ Exercise regularly
- ◆ Get enough sleep
- ◆ Make time for your hobbies and interests
- ◆ Use relaxation strategies and techniques
- ◆ Accept there are things you can't control
- ◆ Take health programs provided by your employer or health care provider

SUPPORT

Your employer may have an Employee Assistance Program you can use. These programs help you deal with work or personal issues.



WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

Employability skills are essential skills valued by employers.

You can begin developing these skills at any time and learn to take advantage of opportunities where you can strengthen skills you already have.

Use the following lists to identify and evaluate your key employability skills. Decide which skills you already have and which skills you think you need to work on.

DEVELOP POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- ◆ Interact with respect and be non-judgmental when listening to others
- ◆ Respond to others in an appropriate and non-offensive way
- ◆ Help co-workers and peers accomplish tasks or goals
- ◆ Apply problem-solving strategies to improve relations with others
- ◆ Show traits such as compassion, listening, coaching, team development and appreciation when managing others

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS

- ◆ Adjust the communication approach for your audience, your purpose and the situation
- ◆ Organize messages/information in a logical and helpful manner
- ◆ Speak clearly and write legibly
- ◆ Model behaviors to show active listening
- ◆ Apply what you read to actual practice
- ◆ Ask appropriate questions for clarity

COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS

- ◆ Work effectively in teams with people of diverse backgrounds regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, religion, political views or abilities
- ◆ Share responsibility for collaborative work and decision making
- ◆ Use a problem-solving process to work through differences of opinion in a constructive manner to achieve a reasonable compromise
- ◆ Avoid contributing to unproductive group conflict (don't gossip)
- ◆ Share information and carry out responsibilities in a timely manner

*Developing Your Employability Skills is based on the [Wisconsin's Employability Skills Certificate Implementation Guide \(PDF\)](#).

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/cte/pdf/esimpleguide.pdf>



MAINTAIN COMPOSURE UNDER PRESSURE

- ◆ Use critical thinking skills to determine the best options or outcomes when faced with a challenging situation
- ◆ Carry out assigned duties while under pressure
- ◆ Act in a respectful, professional and non-offensive way while under pressure
- ◆ Apply stress management techniques to cope under pressure

DEMONSTRATE INTEGRITY

- ◆ Carry out responsibilities in an ethical, legal and—if necessary—confidential manner
- ◆ Respond to situations in a timely manner
- ◆ Take personal responsibility to correct problems
- ◆ Model behaviors that demonstrate self-discipline, reliability and dependability

PERFORM QUALITY WORK

- ◆ Carry out written and verbal directions accurately
- ◆ Ask for clarification so you understand what's expected
- ◆ Use equipment, technology and work strategies to improve workflow
- ◆ Apply problem-solving strategies to improve productivity
- ◆ Adhere to the employer's regulations and practices



PROVIDE QUALITY GOODS OR SERVICE

- ◆ Show support for the organizational goals and principles by your own actions
- ◆ Display a respectful and professional image to coworkers and customers
- ◆ Display an enthusiastic attitude and desire to take care of customer needs
- ◆ Seek out ways to increase customer satisfaction
- ◆ Produce goods and services to your employer's specifications

SHOW INITIATIVE & SELF-DIRECTION

- ◆ Prioritize and carry out responsibilities without being told to do it
- ◆ Respond with enthusiasm and flexibility in handling tasks
- ◆ Use unsatisfactory outcomes as learning experiences
- ◆ Support your actions with sound reasoning and principles
- ◆ Balance your personal activities to minimize interference with work responsibilities

ADAPT TO CHANGE

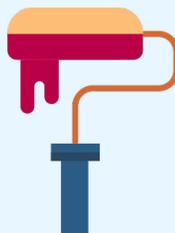
- ◆ Show flexibility and willingness to learn new skills
- ◆ Use problem-solving and critical-thinking skills
- ◆ Modify your work behaviors based on feedback, unsatisfactory outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness
- ◆ Display a “can do” attitude

FOLLOW SAFETY & SECURITY REGULATIONS & PRACTICES

- ◆ Follow the employer’s safety requirements
- ◆ Follow security procedures
- ◆ Maintain a safe work environment
- ◆ Demonstrate professionalism in an emergency

USE TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION & MEDIA

- ◆ Apply technology effectively in the workplace
- ◆ Access and evaluate information
- ◆ Access training manuals, websites, or other job-related media



COMPLETE TRAINING AND/OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR JOB

- ◆ Participate in required career-related training and/or educational programs
- ◆ Pass certification tests to qualify for licensure and/or certification
- ◆ Participate in company training and orientation

SET GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ◆ Make your goals specific and measurable
- ◆ Set work-related goals that align with your company’s goals and principals
- ◆ Identify strategies to reach your goals
- ◆ Track your progress and regularly evaluate and modify your plan to reach your goals

KEY SKILLS

Now that you've learned some ways to develop and strengthen your employability skills, take a few moments to deepen your understanding of key skills your employer expects.

PROFESSIONALISM

Employers want new workers to be self-motivated, responsible, ethical and team-oriented. They want new workers to have strong communication, interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Put these skills together and you've got professionalism.

Professionalism is More Than Carrying a Shoulder Bag or Tool Belt to Work

Professionalism means conducting yourself with responsibility, integrity and excellence. It means communicating effectively and appropriately. It means always finding a way to contribute to the organization.

You'll have lots of different jobs throughout your career and each job likely requires a different level or different set of skills. No matter what industry you're working in—from arts and media to engineering and architecture—all the jobs have one thing in common: workers need to be professional to succeed.

Professionalism Gives You an Advantage at Work

Professionalism may look slightly different in different work environments, but the core elements stay the same. Professionalism is easy to spot. In a factory or on a construction site, a professional worker works hard and manages time effectively, this includes coming to work and returning on time from breaks.

For instance: A professional worker in a customer service setting will respond to customers' needs, speak clearly and politely to customers and colleagues and have a neat and clean appearance. In an office setting, a professional employee works productively with others and strives to meet high standards and continuous improvement.

RESOURCE

*Digging Deeper into 5 Key Skills is based on [Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success](https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf) (PDF). <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf>



COMMUNICATION

To your employer, good communication skills are essential. In fact, employers consistently rank good communication skills as an essential skill regardless of the job you're doing. Your communication skills probably helped you get the job you have now.

Giving & Receiving Information

Communication skills are important to everyone—they're how we give and receive information and share our ideas and opinions. Communication is complex and involves:

- ◆ Visual (signs, symbols, images and pictures)
- ◆ Verbal (sounds, language and tone of voice)
- ◆ Aural (listening and hearing)
- ◆ Non-verbal (facial expressions, body language and posture)
- ◆ Written (journals, emails, blogs and text messages)

It's important for you to develop a variety of skills for communicating **TO** others and for interpreting communication **FROM** others.

Here are 3 examples of decoding typical workplace communications:*

What they said	What it means	What it <i>really</i> means
"Let's circle back to this."	"Let's revisit this topic at a later time."	"I don't want to think about this right now."
"This just needs some wordsmithing."	"This copy needs some revisions."	"I'm going to rewrite this."
"Does anyone have the bandwidth for this?"	"Does anyone have time or resources to work on this?"	"Don't leave me hanging here people."

*Excerpt from Asana's Guide to Breaking through Buzzwords.

Demonstrating Communication Skills

Impress your employer by showing them you're engaged. Being engaged means you're paying attention using positive non-verbal communication, asking questions and/or taking notes.

Knowing your audience and understanding how they need to receive information from you is a critical communication skill. For instance:

Using company jargon when speaking with coworkers is fine because they'll understand you. But, using company jargon with people outside the company will likely create confusion and misunderstanding.

Change your communication style to match your audience.



TEAMWORK

Teamwork is an essential skill for job success. Becoming a valued team player is one of the most important skills you can develop for your success.



Teams Plan, Coordinate & Cooperate

Successful teams depend on planning, coordinating and cooperating.

For instance: A basketball team works together to set up the perfect shot, every team member has a specific job to do to make that shot. They planned, coordinated and cooperated to make the basket.

While it might look like one player made the basket, it took the entire team working together to make the basket: Each team member played their role and the team reached its goal.

To succeed in any work environment, develop teamwork skills so you can work well with others and develop an understanding that not every player on the team can or will be the one who shoots the ball and makes the basket.

Teamwork Skills & Habits

Teamwork means building relationships. Good team members:

- ◆ Work cooperatively
- ◆ Contribute to the group with ideas, suggestions and effort
- ◆ Communicate (both sending and receiving)
- ◆ Respect different opinions, customs and individual preferences
- ◆ Participate in group decision-making

Working Together

Everyone benefits when you and your coworkers work together to achieve a goal.

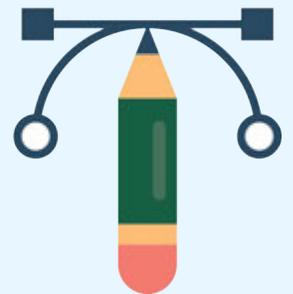
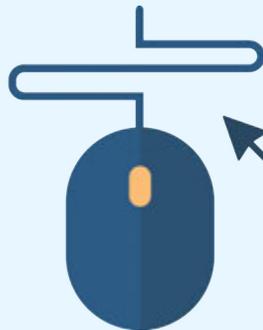
Team members plan ahead and work cooperatively to assign tasks, assess progress and deliver on time.

Team discussions involve differing approaches and opinions, shared and discussed respectfully.

You personally benefit from working on teams and you'll use these skills not just at work but throughout your life. Team skills you'll develop:

- ◆ Relationships and trust
- ◆ Conflict resolution skills
- ◆ Creativity and learning
- ◆ Complementary strengths

No matter what position you play on your team, stay focused on the goal and do your part, even if you're not the one with the ball.



Following the Leader

Sometimes, teams have a manager or leader. This person is the team facilitator.

While team members participate respectfully in discussion and carry out assigned tasks, decisions and conflicts are usually deferred to the facilitator. Following the leader, whether or not you agree with them, is in the best interest of the team and its goals.

Although team consensus is wonderful, it's not always possible. If your team can't reach a consensus, your team's leader supports and facilitates decision-making so the outcome is quality teamwork.

CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING

When your employer hired you, they expected you to have skills beyond basic reading, writing and arithmetic. The skills they expect include critical thinking and problem solving.

You'll need critical thinking and problem-solving skills to correctly identify problems and find workable solutions.

Whether you're in an office or at a construction site, you'll have difficulties with any number of things and you'll need to deal with those difficulties constructively and fairly.

Developing a well-thought-out solution within a reasonable time frame is a skill your employer really values.

Thinking on Your Feet

Dealing with difficulties means solving problems. Sometimes, you won't have time to study a problem and come up with a reasoned solution—you may have to "think on your feet" and solve a pressing problem immediately.

For instance, when you were called on to answer a question in class but you didn't have the answer, you thought quickly and responded immediately: that's "thinking on your feet".

Sharing Your Ideas

Your employer expects you to think critically and creatively, share your thoughts and opinions, use good judgment and make decisions on your own and in teams.

For instance: As a new employee, you may see a step in a task you think should be eliminated because it'll save time, money and effort. But because you're new, you may hesitate to share your idea. Don't! Employers usually appreciate new employee ideas because new employees often have insight and offer a fresh perspective.

Remember—because you're new—you may not have all the details about why something is done a certain way. There may be things you don't know that require the task to be done in a certain way. You may want to learn more before you share your idea.

ENTHUSIASM & ATTITUDE

Enthusiasm can make the difference between advancing in your career or being passed over for promotion. An enthusiastic attitude gives you a big advantage on the road to workplace success.

Attitude is so important that many employers would rather train enthusiastic but inexperienced workers than hire someone with perfect qualifications but a less-than-positive attitude.

An employee with enthusiasm comes across as someone who wants to be at work and is willing to do what it takes to get the job done.

The Enthusiasm Advantage

All other things being equal, an employee demonstrating a positive attitude and eagerness to take on new tasks has an advantage over a coworker who acts disinterested or is unwilling to exert themselves.

Being enthusiastic has a positive effect on both your physical and mental energy.



Demonstrating Enthusiasm

Demonstrate your enthusiasm at work:

- ◆ Arrive on time
- ◆ Show:
 - Sincere interest in your job
 - A positive attitude
 - Your willingness to listen, learn and try new things
 - Initiative
- ◆ Volunteer to help your coworkers

For instance: An enthusiastic employee takes the initiative to approach customers and offer help before the customer has to ask. If the employee can't answer the customer's question, they go find the answer.

Learning Enthusiasm

Being enthusiastic is a learned behavior—it's not a "you have it or you don't" trait.

If it's not in your nature to show enthusiasm, you can learn by acting enthusiastically. How? Practice and adopt these habits:

- ◆ Let go of pessimism
- ◆ Smile often
- ◆ Seek advice from others in your workplace
- ◆ Demonstrate a positive attitude
- ◆ Improve your job-related skills

Use the next page to create a plan for strengthening your skills to succeed at work.



PLAN TO IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS WORKSHEET

Skills**Practice and Learn****Notes****I have these skills****How to practice them****Notes about my skills****I want to strengthen these skills****How to strengthen them****Notes about strengthening them****I want to learn these skills****How to learn them****Notes about learning them**