

How can I identify my skills?

Being able to identify your skills, and match them against the skills needed for a specific job or type of work, is an important skill in itself.

It can help you to:

- make career choices
- understand your strengths and weaknesses
- decide which jobs to apply for
- write a good CV
- fill in application forms
- impress employers at interview
- feel more confident about applying.

Unfortunately, it can be hard to do, even for experienced job seekers.

But it's not because you don't have any. You have the skills. If only you could describe them to other people!

There's no easy fix for this, but there are a few simple steps you can take to work out what your skills are, and be aware of how you've used them in the past. This will be useful for your CV, completing application forms and answering interview questions.

Step 1: List your life experiences – or draw a mind map of them

Take a large sheet of paper. Start noting down your life experiences over the last few years. For example:

- school (subjects you studied, projects you've done, events you've taken part in)
- part time work (Saturday jobs, holiday jobs, babysitting, paper rounds)
- work experience (placements you've had through school or college)
- training (from one-day first aid sessions to Modern Apprenticeships)
- volunteering or community work
- youth awards – such as Duke of Edinburgh's Awards
- enterprise and employability events and awards
- home life (maybe you've had to look after others or learn practical skills)
- leisure time (playing a sport, taking part in competitions, being in a team or organising things).

They don't have to be in any particular order. Just write down what comes into your head. Don't expect to finish this activity straight away. Take your time. Go back to your list later, just in case you've forgotten anything important.

Step 2: Identify and list the skills you've learned from your experiences

Take another large sheet of paper (or make a table in Word). Divide the page or table into three columns.

Label the first column 'Experience', the second 'Tasks' and the third 'Skills'.

Now, look closely at each experience you've listed on the first sheet.

- List each experience in rows down the first column.
- What did you actually do? List the activities involved in each experience.
- What skills did you use, or learn as a result of your experience? List them in the third column.

Take the time to do this exercise properly. You'll soon discover you have more skills than you first thought.

Create your skills list using the entries in the third column.

You can also complete the quick My Skills self-assessment in the **Portfolio** area of Planit. It's quick and easy to sign up. Our downloadable **Skills Words** and **Qualities Words** lists at the end of this article will also be useful.

Identifying your skills can also help you when you are making career decisions. How well do your strongest skills match up against the skills needed for the career, or careers, you are interested in?

However, when you are looking for work the next thing you need to know is how to relate or match your skills to the skills needed for a particular job.

Read the article [How do I match my skills to a job description](#).