

Soft skills are non-technical skills that relate to how you work. They include how you interact with colleagues, how you solve problems, and how you manage your work. Learn what soft skills are, types and examples of soft skills, and ways to develop soft skills.

What Are Soft Skills? Soft skills relate to how you work. Soft skills include interpersonal (people) skills, communication skills, listening skills, time management, and empathy, among others.

Hiring managers typically look for job candidates with soft skills because they make someone more successful in the workplace. Someone can be excellent with technical, job-specific skills, but if they can't manage their time or work within a team, they may not be successful in the workplace.

Alternate names: Interpersonal skills, essential skills, non-cognitive skills.

How Soft Skills Work

Soft skills are also important to the success of most employers. After all, nearly every job requires employees to engage with others in some way.

Another reason hiring managers and employers look for applicants with soft skills is that soft skills are transferable skills that can be used regardless of the person's job. This makes job candidates with soft skills very adaptable employees.

Soft skills are particularly crucial in customer-based jobs. These employees are in direct contact with customers. It takes several soft skills to be able to listen to a customer and provide that customer with helpful and polite service.

Types of Soft Skills

Soft skills include the personal attributes, personality traits, and communication abilities needed for success on the job. Soft skills characterize how a person interacts in his or her relationships with others.

Soft skills include:

- Adaptability
- Communication
- Creative thinking
- Dependability
- Work ethic
- Teamwork
- Positivity
- Time management
- Motivation
- Problem-solving
- Critical thinking
- Conflict resolution

How to Get Soft Skills

Unlike [hard skills](#) that are learned, soft skills are similar to emotions or insights that allow people to “read” others. These are much harder to learn, at least in a traditional classroom. They are also much harder to measure and evaluate.

That said, some job skills programs do cover soft skills. They may discuss soft skills so job seekers know what they are and the importance of highlighting them on their resume.

If you've been working for a while, chances are you've already developed some soft skills. For example, if you've worked in retail, you've worked in a team environment. If you've helped unhappy customers find a resolution, you've used conflict resolution and problem-solving skills.

If you're new to work, think of other activities you've done, either through school or on a volunteer basis. Chances are you've had to communicate, adapt to changes, and solve problems.

You can also reflect on soft skills you need to develop. For example, instead of just discussing problems with your manager, suggest solutions to those problems. If you see a colleague struggling, offer to pitch in. If there's a process that could improve your workplace, suggest it.

Employers typically don't directly ask if you have soft skills. Instead, they present situations and ask what you would do to assess whether you have soft skills.

Highlighting Your Soft Skills

When you're applying for a new job, highlight your soft skills as well as your job-specific ones. First, make a list of the soft skills you have that are relevant to the job you want. Compare your list of soft skills with the job listing. Include some of these soft skills in your resume. You can add them to a [skills section](#). You can also mention these soft skills in your [cover letter](#). Pick one or two soft skills you have that appear to be the most important for the job you'd like. In your cover letter, provide evidence that shows you have those particular skills.

Finally, you can highlight these soft skills in your [interviews](#). You can demonstrate your soft skills during the interview by being friendly and approachable. If you pay close attention while the interviewer is talking, you will show your listening skills.

Key Takeaways

- Soft skills are non-technical skills that impact your performance in the workplace.
- You likely already have soft skills from your school and work experience.
- You can also develop soft skills at work, school, volunteer activities, and in job training programs.
- Include your soft skills in your resume and cover letter.
- Demonstrate your soft skills during interviews.