
During the job application and interview process, employers look for applicants with hard skills and soft skills. Successful candidates will make sure to put both skill sets on display. In order to do so effectively, it helps to understand the difference between these two types of skills.

Hard Skills -

Hard skills are teachable abilities or skill sets that are easy to quantify. Typically, you'll learn hard skills in the classroom, through books or other training materials, or on the job. These hard skills are often listed in your cover letter and on your resume and are easy for an employer or recruiter to recognize. Hard skills include:

- Proficiency in a foreign language
- A degree or certificate
- Typing speed
- Machine operation

Soft Skills -

Soft skills, on the other hand, are subjective skills that are much harder to quantify. Also known as "people skills" or "interpersonal skills," soft skills relate to the way you relate to and interact with other people. Soft skills include:

- Communication
- Flexibility
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Patience
- Persuasion
- Problem solving abilities
- Teamwork
- Time management
- Work ethic

Unlike hard skills, it's hard to point to specific evidence that you possess a soft skill. If an employer is looking for someone who knows a programming language, you can share your grade in a class or point to a program you created using the language. But how can you show that you have a work ethic or any other soft skill?

- Make note of your soft skills and point out some concrete instances where you've used them.
- Just saying you have the skill isn't very meaningful. Instead, your best bet is to demonstrate that you possess this quality by sharing examples of times when you used it.

While certain hard skills are necessary for any position, employers increasingly look for job applicants with certain soft skills. That's because it's generally easier for an employer to train a new employee in a hard skill (such as how to use a certain computer program) than to train an employee in a soft skill (such as patience).

Analytical skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills are among the top skills employers look for from prospective employees.

Employers are increasingly looking for candidates with hybrid skills, which are a combination of soft and technical skills. Candidates with this skill set are very competitive in a continually evolving, technologically-focused economy. If you possess the top skills employers seek in candidates for employment, incorporate them into your resume and cover letters and mention them during job interviews.

Emphasize both Hard and Soft Skills -

Since they're both important, emphasize both your hard and soft skills during the job application process. This way, even if you lack a hard skill required by the company, you can emphasize a particular soft skill that you know would be valuable in the position. For example, if the job involves working on a number of group projects, emphasize your experience and skill as a team player and your ability to communicate with team members.

How to Highlight Your Skills -

To make sure potential employers are aware of your skills, highlight them on your resume and cover letter. Weave in mentions of your skills during job interviews.

Incorporate Skills Into Your Resume: On your resume, include a skills section that lists out relevant skills. You can also point to your skills in the job description. For instance, if you're applying for a job where you need legal knowledge and the ability to communicate with clients successfully, you can include similar experience in job descriptions.

Include Relevant Skills in Your Cover Letter: Your cover letter is also an opportunity to highlight both sets of skills. When it comes to soft skills, however, rather than saying you have a soft skill, demonstrate that you have it. For instance, rather than saying "I have leadership skills," say, "At my role at Company ABC, I steered the sales team to record numbers, creating a bonus structure that generated strong results."

Share Your Skills During Job Interviews: During interviews, the STAR interview response technique can help you show off soft skills. STAR, which stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result, is a way to answer behavioral interview questions ("Describe a time when...") that involves recounting a work-related challenge, what role you played, what you did to affect the outcome, and what the result of the action you took was on the situation.

Skills to List and Avoid -

The type of skills to highlight on resumes, cover letters, and during interviews vary depending upon the type of job for which you're applying. If you're seeking an administrative job, for instance, communication skills, customer service skills, experience crafting business correspondence, and stenography are helpful skills to list.

If the position is managerial related, it's imperative to demonstrate supervision experience and leadership skills like the ability to delegate and problem-solve. Interpersonal skills such as empathy, patience, and diplomacy are also important traits to possess.

Reading the job description carefully will give you a sense of the type of job-specific skills an employer is looking for in applicants. What you won't find in that description, however, are the skills not to list, including proficiency with software or technology that is no longer relevant like MS-DOS or Lotus 1-2-3.

The same goes for skills that you do not possess or are otherwise unrelated to the job in question. Experience as a graphic designer, for example, wouldn't necessarily be applicable to a position in human resources.

Doyle, A. (n.d.). Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills: What's the Difference? Retrieved from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/hard-skills-vs-soft-skills-2063>