

## TRANSFERABLE SKILLS DEVELOPED AS A RESULT OF COMPLETING A COLLEGE DEGREE

It is common to see a college degree required as part of the qualifications for many jobs. Of course, technical-, medical-, and science-related fields require completed courses that indicate a level of expertise in those specific majors, but even in nontechnical- or non-science-oriented majors, typically called “liberal arts majors,” employers are looking for skills that are usually developed as a part of the college completion experience. The college degree is an indicator for the employer that the applicant has mastered certain higher-level transferable skills.

Let’s examine the transferable skills that a liberal arts major should develop as a result of successfully completing college. A liberal arts degree is preparation for a variety of careers. In fact, the majority of those who graduate with a liberal arts degree do not find employment in fields related to their major (e.g., history majors do not necessarily become historians). As you read about the following clusters of skills, think about which skills you are developing as a student. Do you have research skills? Do you have organizational and time-management skills? Chances are, you do!

Examples of the skills acquired in a typical college liberal arts degree program include the following (note how these mirror the skills identified by the SCANS report):

**Communication skills.** Listening effectively, writing essays and reports, convincing individuals and groups of the importance of your ideas, negotiating disputes and differences, selling yourself and your product or idea.

**Problem-solving or critical-thinking skills.** Analytical thinking, thinking abstractly, connecting ideas or concepts in new or fresh ways, determining broader issues, defining an issue, identifying several solutions to the same problem, hypothesizing implications and future scenarios, creating new ways to handle an issue, persuading others to act in the best interests of the group, synthesizing ideas.


**Human relations skills.** Listening, communicating understanding verbally and nonverbally, compromising, speaking with colleagues, advising people, helping people resolve problems, communicating ideas effectively, cooperating with others to solve problems and to complete projects, working well with diverse groups of people, appreciating differences, teaching or coaching others.

**Organizational skills.** Assessing needs, planning or arranging presentations or social events, designing programs, coordinating events, delegating responsibility, evaluating programs, managing the implementation of projects, time management.

**Research skills.** Searching computerized databases and published reference materials, identifying themes, analyzing data, classifying data and/or handling detail work, investigating problems, recording data, writing reports and term papers.

You now know that you transfer many skills from one job to another. Once you understand what skills are required in a job, you can use these skills in your job application, in your resumes, and during job interviews to describe and reinforce the fact that you have what it takes to do the job, even if you have never had the exact job title. You make the connection between what you have and what the employer wants by claiming the same skills. Remember that in a nontechnical or nonscience career, your *natural abilities and attitudes and the skills learned at college* are perhaps your strongest assets—the most important set of skills you have for selling yourself. This is your competitive edge!

Identifying your skills

TIPS FROM THE PROS**SKILLS SETS FOR THE HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY**

Although each career in the field of health care has its own unique requirements, you can be sure that there are common health-care career skills required of everyone in this rapidly expanding field. Most positions require excellent interpersonal and communication skills, some level of technical or quantitative thinking capacity, and a strong work ethic. Additionally, most positions entail a great deal of responsibility and maturity. Health-care workers must be willing to learn and to continue to learn, because constant updating and recertification are the norm in this constantly changing field with the development of new technology, advanced procedures, experimental treatments, and even new diseases.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

1. From this description, what skills mentioned do you already possess?
2. What can you do now to develop any of the skills mentioned?



## Your Most Valuable Assets: Your Personality Traits

We've talked about transferable skills that were learned or acquired at school, work, or home, or through leisure and volunteer activities. Many of your skills may have come to you naturally, without training or education. We call these skills *natural abilities*. We're referring here to aspects of your personality such as the ability to stay calm in a crisis, the ability to manage many things at once, a natural ability with math and numbers, and/or a natural ability with words. More important, we're referring to personal characteristics such as enthusiasm, a good attitude, persistence, confidence, a sense of humor, and many other qualities that contribute to success in the workplace.

These abilities will help you *sell yourself and your talents*. These personal characteristics, called *adaptive skills*, may in the end separate you from other qualified applicants and enable you to get the job, top evaluations, raises, and promotions. They may even help you keep your job in tough times.

We don't mean to imply that an employer will look at your enthusiastic, smiling face and say, "It doesn't matter that you have no experience—we want you because you're cheerful!" However, once you have learned to identify your job-specific skills and summarize your experience in such a way that it relates closely to the job being discussed, you will have a greater chance of succeeding if you are aware of and express your best self with interest, enthusiasm, and friendliness. Know and use your personal skills!

If you were to look at the skills listed at the bottom of the O\*NET Exhibit 5.2, you might never come up with the job title of criminal investigator. However, this exhibit does include the tasks that are related to criminal investigation. Therefore, *skills* are very general abilities that relate to jobs, whereas *tasks* are usually specific requirements found in jobs. *The key to using your favorite skills to find a related job is to use O\*NET.* Your local career center or One Stop Career Center has access to O\*NET if you do not have access to its website (<http://online.onetcenter.org>) at home. This resource can help you discover the relationship between occupations and skills. O\*NET is the acronym for the Occupational Information Network, and it was developed by the U.S. Department of Labor. The program is an easy-to-use, interactive computer database that collects, analyzes, and disseminates skill and occupational information in more than 1,100 occupational areas. Simply check off your desired skills and the O\*NET program will list various occupations that use them. One especially useful feature in O\*NET is the listing of related jobs. Exhibit 5.2 indicates the

## EXHIBIT 5.2 O\*NET Online

### SUMMARY JOB DESCRIPTION REPORT FOR: 33-3021.03 – CRIMINAL INVESTIGATORS AND SPECIAL AGENTS

Investigate alleged or suspected criminal violations of federal, state, or local laws to determine if evidence is sufficient to recommend prosecution.

Sample of related job titles: Special Agent, Criminal Investigator, Investigator, FBI Special Agent (Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent)

#### TASKS

- Obtain and verify evidence by interviewing and observing suspects and witnesses, or by analyzing records.
- Record evidence and documents, using equipment such as cameras and photocopy machines.
- Examine records in order to locate links in chains of evidence or information.
- Prepare reports that detail investigation findings.
- Collaborate with other offices and agencies in order to exchange information and coordinate activities.
- Determine scope, timing, and direction of investigations.
- Testify before grand juries concerning criminal activity investigations.
- Analyze evidence in laboratories or in the field.
- Investigate organized crime, public corruption, financial crime, copyright infringement, civil rights violations, bank robbery, extortion, kidnapping, and other violations of federal or state statutes.
- Identify case issues and evidence needed, based on analysis of charges, complaints, or allegations of law violations.

Skills include writing, judgment and decision making, complex problem solving, coordination, instructing, social perceptiveness, speaking, active listening, service orientation, and persuasion.

Source: O\*NET: [online.onetcenter.org](http://online.onetcenter.org)

related jobs for Criminal Investigator such as Special Agent. In this case there are only a few. However, for other occupations, there may be up to 10 examples. For example, if you searched for “counselor,” you would find these related jobs: Supervisor, Special Services, Veterans Contact Representative, Counselor, Director of Counseling, Residence Counselor, Foreign-Student Advisor, and several others. When you click on any of these job titles, you will find the skills and job tasks describing these jobs.



## SUCCESS strategies

### Describing Skills

Remember that skills are the currency of the job market. The more you have and the better you are at describing them, the greater your opportunities will be.

- Review the list of transferable skills of a college graduate (see p. 91).
- As you read each skill under each category, think of a specific time when you developed or demonstrated that skill in school, during your leisure activities, or during a past or present job.
- Create a skills folder on your computer as part of your career portfolio to remind yourself about your “self-motivated” skills and where you have used your skills.
- Review the skills folder the next time you are writing a resume or interviewing for a job so you can convincingly describe the skills you possess and how you demonstrated these skills.
- Your ability to communicate this critical information to employers will set you apart from the crowd in the interview process and help you to rise to the top of any employer’s list of candidates for hire.