

## Skills for Employment Series

# Assessing Job Skills

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## Introduction

The first step in searching for a job involves understanding the occupations that are right for you. Too often people start looking for work as if any job would do. Work is far too important in your life to take this approach. A normal working day lasts eight hours (or one-third of the day). Add in the time to prepare for and travel to and from work, and you will find a considerable amount of time is spent on job-related activities.

## Importance of Work

Satisfaction with a job is an important factor in overall happiness with self and family. Work is often the third most important aspect of life, right behind family and friends. If you have problems at work, you are likely to take those problems home and let them affect your personal life. If half of your waking hours is spent at work, you should try to find a job that gives you satisfaction. Unhappiness with a job situation not only hurts you but the company you work for and your family as well.

Work is important to the quality of life. The rate of pay and the company benefits of a job influence the things you can provide for your family. Work is also a great source of support to your self-esteem. Finding a job you take pride in can be extremely important.

Given the importance of work in life, pay a great deal of attention to finding a job that fits your needs. You

can start this process by identifying the specific skills you bring to a job. These might include welding, book-keeping, carpentry or management skills. At the same time, you may also have skills that apply to a number of job situations. These skills could include organizing job tasks, speaking and relating to people, supervising other employees or solving problems. These skills are just as important as basic skills to an employer because they can be applied to a number of situations.

Another important part of determining the right job for you is identifying your interests. Simply having a skill in a particular field will not bring about job satisfaction. You need to be interested in the work you do. Too often people spend time doing the work they know how to do rather than exploring work they would like to do. When looking for a job, be aware of personal interests. Of course, you could be interested in a job that you are not qualified to do and, therefore, have very little chance of being hired. While you need to be realistic when looking for work, don't let lack of experience or skills stop you from working toward your interests. If your interest is high, you can always get training or certification.

The steps of identifying skills and interests are important to the overall process of searching for and acquiring a job. This information will steer you in the right direction when setting up your job search strategy. It will also be useful when writing a résumé, filling out a job application and during a job interview.

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## Basic Skills

Skill identification begins with self-evaluation – what can you do? To help answer what you are able to do, start with your basic skills. Basic skills are skills you learned from working as a volunteer, had training in or acquired from previous work experience. Examples of skills obtained through volunteer experience include bookkeeping, child care and writing business letters. Machine repair, carpentry and typing are skills you may have learned in formalized training. Skills from previous jobs might be operation of equipment and supervision of other employees. List all of the basic skills you possess. If you received any training or certification in those skills, be sure to include that information.

## Transferable Skills

In addition to basic skills, each of us also has a set of transferable skills that apply to any number of jobs. These skills are not always as obvious to us but are very important to employers. For example, you may be very good at servicing equipment. This is a skill that can transfer to a job in appliance or auto repair. If you are good at mediating problems and finding solutions, perhaps a job in a store merchandise return department is for you. If you have supervision skills, management may be a good area for you. Think of transferable skills you have. Are you good at managing people? Sizing up situations? Monitoring progress? Anticipating problems? List transferable skills you can offer an employer. Once you have identified some skills, write an example of each showing how you have used this skill. Specify how this skill is useful to you and how often you use this skill. Think about how this skill might be useful to an employer.

## Interests

Besides your basic and transferable skills, each person has hobbies, activities and other interests that may be of use when looking for a job. For instance,

you may be very good at working with wood to make gifts and small furniture. You may be active in church, particularly in organizing the annual fund raiser. You may make your own clothing or home furnishings. Each example shows you have interests. These interests could be helpful when searching for a job. Some of these interests might be directly transferable to a job. For example, if you sew, you could work for a clothing manufacturer or a fabric shop. If you are a good fund raiser, perhaps a nonprofit organization could use your help during fund drives. Although not all interests are directly transferable to jobs, most employers look favorably on the fact that you are active in your community and can organize and lead activities.

## Summary

Identifying your basic skills, transferable skills and interests can greatly enhance your job search. Skill and interest identification allows you to see what your strong points are. It also helps you see areas where you may need skill improvement to obtain a certain job. Skill identification is the first step in helping you find challenging, satisfying employment.

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