

Employability Skills: What students need to know

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January 27, 2016

Handout for lesson plan

1 Introduce the terms *employability*, *hard skills*, *soft skills/transferable skills*.

- **Employability:** a set of achievements – skills, understandings, and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy (University of Edinburgh)
- **Hard skills:** the specific skills and knowledge that are needed in one's professional field
- **Soft skills/transferable skills:** generic skills developed in one situation which can be transferred to another situation (Trinity University)

Notes: First, introduce the terms to your students. If you have beginning or lower-intermediate SS, you may need to do this in the native language. The important thing is for SS to be able to understand the information.

2 Work with students to help them identify the environments, or domains, in which transferable skills are useful:

- school
- work
- home
- social life

Notes: Explain that transferable skills are skills that are useful in different situations and different areas of their lives. You might want to give them one of these domains, eg, work, and see if they can come up with the other three.

3 Hand out a table listing the skill areas and some specific subskills related to each skill area. Go over the table to help students understand it.

Skills	Definition	Subskills
Communication and interpersonal skills	The ability to explain what you mean in a clear and concise way through written and spoken means. To listen and relate to other people, and to act upon key information / instructions.	Listening actively Speaking clearly and directly Empathizing Establishing and using networks Being assertive Sharing information
Problem-solving skills	The ability to understand a problem by breaking it down into smaller parts, identifying the key issues and implications, and identifying solutions. To apply your knowledge from many different areas to solving a task.	Developing creative, innovative solutions Developing practical solutions Thinking logically Solving problems in teams Applying a range of strategies to solve problems Generating a range of options Identifying opportunities not obvious to others
Using your initiative and being self-motivated	Having new ideas of your own which can be made into a reality. Showing a strong personal drive and not waiting to be told to do things.	Having a personal vision and goals Evaluating and monitoring your own performance Taking responsibility Developing a long-term vision Translating ideas into action Taking initiative and making decisions
Organizational skills	Being organized and methodical. Being able to plan work to meet deadlines and targets. Monitoring progress to ensure you are on track to meet a deadline. Being able to manage stress.	Managing time and priorities Being resourceful Establishing clear project goals Developing a vision and a plan to accompany it Collecting, analyzing, and organizing information
Team working	Working well with other people, including people from different disciplines, backgrounds, and expertise, in order to accomplish a task or goal.	Working as an individual and as a team member Knowing how to define roles Identifying the strengths of the team members Giving and receiving feedback Coordinating tasks with others Brainstorming

Skills	Definition	Subskills
Learning and adaptation	Being enthusiastic about your work. Being able to identify ways to learn from your mistakes.	Managing your own learning Adapting to new situations Having enthusiasm for ongoing learning Being open to new ideas and techniques Being prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills
Numeracy	Being able to use data and mathematics to support evidence or demonstrate a point.	Using mathematics, including budgeting and financial management, to solve problems Understanding and using charts and graphs Estimating and guessing
Valuing diversity and difference	Knowing the value of diversity and what it can bring. Understanding and being considerate of the different needs of different people.	Working with people irrespective of differences in age, gender, race, religion, or political persuasion Respecting cultural differences
Negotiation skills	Taking on board other people's feelings and expressing your own requirements in an unemotional, clear fashion to achieve a positive outcome.	Negotiating responsively Organizing arguments Persuading effectively Applying evaluation criteria

4 Have students refer to the table of skills. Ask them to make a list of:

- skills they have learned outside the classroom that can be used at school or work.
- skills they have developed at school or in extra-curricular activities such as sports, music, or arts that can be useful at work, at home, or in their social lives.

Notes: Give students a couple of examples for each category, and tell them to refer back to the table of skills as they do the activity.

Skills learned outside the classroom might be things like negotiation skills, empathizing, being assertive, working as a team member, using math for budgeting, and many others.

Skills developed at school could be things like speaking clearly and directly, thinking logically, taking responsibility, managing time, working with different types of people, and many more.

5 Write this format on the board and ask students to create a table for each skill category listed in the skills table, eg:

Problem solving	
Enjoy doing	Good at

Notes: Have them make a table like this for each of the nine skills categories, like problem solving, organizational skills, etc. When they have done that, divide them into groups.

6 Have students work in groups to discuss and do the following:

- Work through the list of employability skills in the table and identify the skills that you *enjoy doing* or that you are *good at*.

Eg, Under the skill of *Learning and adaptation*: **Enjoy** learning new skills / **Good at** adapting to new situations

- Think of examples from your own life. If necessary, get someone who knows you well to make suggestions. Remember that your examples can relate to work, school, home, or your social life.

Eg, *I took a photography course because I wanted to learn new ways to use my phone camera.*

Notes: Explain the first step and give an example. Tell them that they don't have to list things for every skill category, but they should probably try to use at least five of the nine categories. The reason for doing this in groups is that they may be able to help each other by pointing out to each other things they are good at or seem to enjoy. Sometimes we don't realize that we are good at something until someone else tells us.

Then explain that they should try to think of an example from their own lives from each category that they listed, so for learning and adaptation, maybe they took a course outside school just because they were interested in learning something new, as in the example of the photography course.

7 Ask students to think of a job or jobs that they are interested in doing in the future and to list at least five employability skills that they think are necessary or desirable for each job. If they are already working, ask them to list skills that are necessary or desirable for their current job.

Notes: Once students have become aware of what transferable skills are and which ones they probably already have, it's time for them to think about which skills they may need in their future lives. You could do this individually, but it might work well in pairs or groups, as they could help each other brainstorm about which skills they would need for the jobs they are interested in. Remind them to refer back to the table as they are doing this.

8 Have students work in groups and discuss their ideas from Step 7. Ask them to discuss which of the skills on their lists they think they already have and which ones they think they need to develop.

Notes: Remind students to say which of the skills they think they already have, and encourage them to speak up if they think someone has a skill that he or she is not mentioning.

Reasons for doing the activity:

Objectives: To help students understand what transferable skills are and why they are important; to help students identify transferable skills that employers value

Rationale: Students have a range of skills that they may not be aware of that are useful in the workplace. They need to recognize the skills that they already possess and how these can be transferred to the workplace. Students need to understand the term 'employability skills' in relation to the world of work and to realize that certain skills are common to many types of work, as well as to their academic and personal lives.

Notes: You may want to share this info with your students at the beginning of the session so that they understand why you are asking them to do the exercises on transferable skills, or you could have them reflect on what they just did and why at the end of the session.

References:

1 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Adapted from ReCaP

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https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/area_b_learning_and_work_exploration_-_employability_skills_0.pdf

If you use the search term **Employability skills, Australia**, the PDF appears in the list of sites as:

9. Employability skills

2 University of Exeter, STEMNET:

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/ambassadors/HESTEM/resources/General/STEMNET%20Employability%20skills%20guide.pdf>