

# Identifying Your Skills, Talents and Personal Qualifications

Most people feel a bit uneasy when it comes to talking about (or talking up) what they do well. No one likes a braggart; so few people feel comfortable bragging about themselves. If we hold dear what our mothers taught us, we might never find a job - because we would forever be imagining ourselves as less qualified than the next guy or gal.

Since you are the right person for the job, however, the rules can be bent. During the job search, the motto is this: It's okay to boast as long as you have something to boast about. Still feel like you don't have anything much to talk about? You are not alone.

But you are mistaken: Like most people, you have hundreds of skills. How can this be? You never learned how to boast, to explain the myriad skills you have or to express your own aptitude to others.

The fact is, you probably take for granted many things you do well that others would find hard or even impossible to do. That is what sets you apart from others and makes you valuable to prospective employers.

***A note on skills vs. duties...Many people find it difficult to distinguish their skills from their duties. Duties are the basic functions of an activity, while skills are the tools by which one accomplishes those functions. Duties or functions are part of any organized activity, whether it is work or play.***

A simple way to illustrate the difference between duties and skills is to consider the management of a lemonade stand. The basic duties of a lemonade stand owner might be: "To manage lemonade operations, including marketing, distribution and finances."

There are many skills he or she might need to carry out these functions. Some examples of those skills are: mixing, measuring, planning, sales, customer service, writing, cash handling, record keeping, maintenance, timeliness, dependability, accuracy, and motivation. A complete list of skills would be very long, but the important point to remember is that it takes a number of skills to accomplish even the most simple duties or functions.

## Developing Your Skills Language

In order to identify your skills, you must know where to look for them. There are three areas that you should inquire into: previous jobs, personal traits and specific talents. Each area corresponds to a particular type of skill.

- **Job-Related Skills.** These are the skills you need to do a specific job, and the ones you have developed in or for past jobs. An auto mechanic, for example, needs to know how to tune engines, repair brakes and use a variety of tools. These are all skills that he or she would need to repair cars. They are job-related skills, and most people think of job skills when they are asked what kind of skills they have.
- **Adaptive Skills or Self-Management Skills.** These skills can also be defined as personality traits or personal characteristics. Such skills are those that you use day by day to get along with others or to adjust to a particular situation. They are skills that make you unique. For example, honesty and enthusiasm are traits that employers look for in a good worker, as evidence of how he or she will "fit" into the organization. While many job seekers do not emphasize these skills in Resumés, employers look for them.
- **Transferable Skills.** These are skills that can transfer from one job or occupation to another. Because most people do not find jobs identical to their previous ones, it is

important to determine how your skills transfer into other opportunities. Writing clearly and the ability to organize things are two examples of transferable skills that you can employ in almost any work situation.

**Transferable skills** generally fall into five categories:

1. **Communication:** the skillful expression, transmission and interpretation of knowledge and ideas
2. **Research and Planning:** the search for specific knowledge and the ability to conceptualize future needs and to devise solutions for meeting those needs
3. **Human Relations:** the use of interpersonal skills for resolving conflict, helping and relating to people
4. **Organization, Management and Leadership:** the ability to supervise, direct and guide individuals and groups in the completion of tasks and fulfillment of goals
5. **Work Survival:** the day-to-day skills that assist in promoting effective production and work satisfaction.