

Communicating Your Skills and Experiences to Employers

What should I say when I meet someone working in a company I am interested in?
What skills should I highlight on a resume? How do I talk about myself in an interview?

Have you ever asked yourself one of the questions listed above? If you have, you are not alone. In fact, if you are thinking about these questions you are already halfway to building effective skills and experience communication skills' because the first step is awareness – awareness that this is a skill and awareness that this is something you can strategize.

Now, as much as communicating your skills and experiences is a skill in and of itself it is also important to take time to address the optimal mindset for these situations; thus, when you sit down to write your resume or when you are getting ready for a networking event it is important to think one thing: I am awesome as I am.

Seriously! This is important! Take a moment to think about your accomplishments, take a moment to think about the challenges you have faced and overcome, take a moment to think about what you have to offer. With this mindset talking and writing about your skills and experiences will be a whole lot easier.

Now for some strategies to get you started. The strategies outlined below guide you on how to explain your skills in relation to an experience. This can really help an employer understand how exactly you have developed and demonstrated your skills.

- Think about 5-10 of your proudest accomplishments. These could be major achievements like a college diploma or a university degree or could be aspects of a major accomplishments like moving from a C+ to a B+ paper in a course.
- Now, ask yourself: (1) How did I accomplish this? and (2) What skills did I use?

Write down all the skills that come to mind. If you are having problems thinking of skills look up a skills list online.

The next step is to think about framing these experiences and skills into 1-2 minute stories. One framework people have found helpful is the 'STAR' framework. This stands for:

- **Situation** – what was your role and the place?
- **Task** – what was the responsibility you had, task you took on, or problem you encounter?
- **Action** – what were the actions you took, the skills you used? This is where you would describe the skills you highlighted in point 2.
- **Result** – in the end, what was the result?

Practice! Practice telling these stories with your friends, family, or record yourself sharing these. Ask for feedback from those you practice with:

1. Do they understand your story?
2. What stood out to them?

With the self-reflection, mindset, tools, and practice suggested above communicating your skills will become easier over time. After all, the employer who you are speaking to was in your shoes just a short time ago!