

The Transferable Skills of a College Student: How to Use Them for Success

One of the age-old conundrums is that employers are looking for employees with experience, but you need someone to give you a job to get that experience. Thankfully, life (and college) will offer you all kinds of experience you can translate into marketable skills.

Transferable skills are basic life skills you can pick up in almost any area of life that will help you across all the other parts of your life. As a college student, you will gain many transferable skills you can highlight on a resume to help you land a first big job.

Here are areas that help develop transferable skills and insight into how to leverage them for success.

Assignments and Class Projects

Depending on what kind of degree you are pursuing in college, you can leverage class assignments to accomplish several goals. You may even turn some of your assignments into paid work.

For instance, if you are reading a degree in digital marketing, you may market your skills to friends or family members and use class projects as opportunities to advertise their company or business. Then they are clients and become valuable additions to your resume.

If you design a flyer or business card for them as part of a graphic design class, they are also clients. If you have to write a research paper, and you can use it as an opportunity to research the market for a friend's company, that too can go on your resume.

Even if you can't combine school work with paying clients, much of the coursework resembles work someone would expect you to do in many jobs. Any presentation you give is a public speaking opportunity, which is also a valuable experience to include in a resume. If you prepare a PowerPoint or multi-media presentation, that too is a marketable skill.

Writing papers or creating a spreadsheets are useful office skills. If you lead a group project, you can talk about performance goals and outcomes, and research the subject. This demonstrates that you have valuable analytical skills, and these are marketable skills: it is just a matter of communicating them as such on a resume.

Extracurricular Activities

Clubs and student organizations offer plenty of opportunities to gain valuable skills that look great on a resume.

If you do any community service projects, volunteering or fundraising, these involve the same skills you will need for many types of employment.

If you lead, plan and coordinate a fundraiser or a similar event, say so. The dollar amount you raised and any other positive outcomes, such as helping someone else succeed, will present important highlights on your CV.

If you serve in a position that requires a certain skill set such as a club secretary or treasurer, that also will look great on a CV. If you serve on student government, then you most likely gained a wide range of skill sets such as marketing yourself to get elected and negotiating to accomplish certain outcomes.

Taking part in student government also shows good leadership skills, which are always in demand. If you worked a part-time or full-time job, or even just worked as an Uber driver in college, that shows good time management skills.

Summer Jobs and Internships

Your summer job working at an ice cream shop may not seem to have much to do with your aspirations to be an attorney, but every job will provide some relevant work experience.

If you have a summer job mowing lawns or cleaning pools, you are showing entrepreneurial skills, especially if you have your own business or have several clients you work for. If you work as a lifeguard, you most likely work within a team and know how to work with others in a crisis. The ability to work in this kind of team dynamic can be critical in many fields and may have more value to future employers than you realize.

If you are a cashier, you not only have experience in sales, but you also have financial management experience. If you are a manager at a local fast-food restaurant, you have managerial experience. While these may seem like insignificant jobs to you in relation to the career you want to have, people build careers one skill at a time.

Every skill you develop at every job you undertake - from babysitting to mowing lawns to flipping burgers at a fast-food joint - will provide valuable experience to speed you along towards your long-term career goals. This is even more true with internships, in fact, many businesses view internships as something of an audition and many interns get hired by the companies they interned for.

Personal Relationships

No matter what kind of job you will have, you will have to work with people.

Managing your relationships well means having good people skills, and this is an important aspect of any job. While you may not always put certain things on your resume, just knowing you have the skills to handle certain situations can boost your confidence and help you in interviews. Sometimes, the most challenging relationships can provide the best learning opportunities.

If you have a roommate, you pick up conflict resolution skills. Sometimes, you may have to even show or develop good managerial skills if your roommate is less responsible. If you have a boyfriend or girlfriend, you learn to balance your relationship with all other responsibilities. That requires good time management and a commitment to work-life balance.

Even your relationships with instructors can provide valuable life lessons, particularly if you have a poor relationship with an instructor that you have to learn to manage.

To Wrap it Up

Life will give you all kinds of similar experiences to those you need to excel in the workplace. You just need to figure out how to communicate your skills and abilities to potential employers.

Think of it this way: if you're not sure you're up to the job, why would potential employers think you are? If you recognize that you have a broad range of experiences under your belt that have prepared you to meet almost any challenge a job can throw at you, then you can express that to employers.

This doesn't mean you have to be arrogant or brag about how experienced you are. It means that being confident you can do the job allows you to project a humble confidence on resumes and in interviews.

If you believe you can do the job, you stand a far better chance of convincing employers the same.

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