



Recognising skills for success in the workplace

Age range: 16-19

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



Session overview

Time	Key learning outcomes	Resources
60 mins	By the end of the activity students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a range of core transferable skills and why they are important Reflect on the skills they have and the best way to develop these for the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising skills for success in the workplace student worksheet Recognising skills for success in the workplace presentation slides

Remember that you can refer to the guiding principles for establishing a safe learning environment in the Appendix section of the LifeSkills content guide. This includes suggestions for signposting students to further support. The content guide can be downloaded [here](#).



LifeSkills is pleased to have worked with The National Autistic Society to ensure the following lesson plan can be adapted to suit the needs of autistic students.

If teaching a lesson including autistic students, here are some key considerations when undertaking the following activities:

- Be aware that autistic students can have difficulty recognising or understanding other people's emotions and expressing their own, as well as relating to situations that they haven't been in themselves - visual aids may help with this
- Reasonable adjustments can be made in an interview to allow autistic candidates to showcase their skills. It's important to be mindful of this when discussing skills - that employers look for communication and eye contact, which can be challenging for some autistic people
- Present abstract concepts in a tangible way because autistic students can often struggle with hypothetical thinking – visual aids may help
- Use closed questions to avoid confusion and be explicit in your instructions

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Activity one

Understanding skills for the workplace

1. Exploring the transferable skills employers are looking for

- Explain to students that as well as academic achievements there are skills which can give them an advantage when looking for employment and are important for success in the workplace. Provide students with a couple of examples (communication, leadership) and see if they can suggest any more
- To gauge students' starting points and assess progress later in the activity, test their initial knowledge, skills and understanding with the following questions:

What is their understanding of 'transferable skills'; can they think of any examples of these, and why these would be valuable to employers?

What skills do you think employers expect when applying for jobs? For example: CV writing, job research, interview techniques. Students could look at the [I am looking for a job page](#) for further examples

What common workplace challenges can they imagine encountering, and what sorts of skills might they need to help with these?

- Students may wish to record their ideas as a written log, mind map or create a collective graffiti wall which they can refer back to later in the session, to gauge progress

2. The connection between skills and job roles

- To bring to life how different people's skills relate to their job roles, play Skill Up. This short team game which gets students guessing jobs based on the skills needed for them. The instructions and playing cards are available to download from the lesson page (barclayslifeskills.com/skillsforsuccess)
- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Team games – Some autistic students can find team games challenging, causing high anxiety - especially if others are really competitive and if the autistic student feels judged by others. You may need to think of this as a reasonable adjustment for the student/s. Avoid pressuring/forcing or judging them. Instead listen, to understand any concerns they may have. Be flexible and prepare before so you can offer options and alternatives - such as smaller teams or working with the teacher/support instead. Also, don't make them feel left out/isolated or assume that they can or can't join in - everyone is different and a lot may depend on the environment they are in and how comfortable they feel. Ask them what would be best to do and help them get the best out of their learning
- Once students have completed the activity, come back together to discuss the different skills and attributes that employers are looking for, featured on the game cards. Students could also use the industry cards from the game to compare how these vary by industry
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Activity one

Understanding skills for the workplace (cont'd)



- To inspire discussion, you can play the short film "[Have you got the edge?](#)" in which spoken word artist George the Poet sets out skills we can identify and develop to get an advantage in the world of work
- Explain that transferable skills can enhance our suitability for a given role, e.g. employers report that 50% of employees will need reskilling by 2025¹. In some professions it's proficiency in the soft skills that can determine your individual success

3. The challenges of developing a career



- Talk to students about the challenges commonly encountered whilst developing a career and applying for jobs. Generate a group discussion in which students suggest possible examples of these challenges, e.g. how time-consuming job applications are; how demotivating it can be dealing with rejection; how it may be challenging to decide what type of job you want. These could be collated as a mind map or collective graffiti wall
- Help students to reflect on what they have learnt about transferable skills by looking at the quotes on **slide 2** from successful business people
- Students may refer to various attributes that they would expect employers to look for or that they possess. These could include personality traits such as being "patient" or "enthusiastic"
- Explain that personality traits describe your character rather than your skillset. These can also be referred to as your personal values or principles that guide your behaviour
- Explain that as well as core transferable skills, identifying and expressing our personal values can be a way of standing out when seeking employment and once we start work

4. Defining skills and values

- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Teamwork – Make sure that autistic students realise that their part in the team has an impact/consequence on their team mates e.g. if you are late in submitting your work it may cause difficulties for colleagues such as giving them little time to complete their work if there is an overall deadline to meet
- Ask students to work in pairs to come up with a definition of skills and values, and how they differ
- Compare the skill of teamwork, and the value of collaboration to help students understand the difference. Teamwork is a skill which someone could develop through working with others to complete a task. If an individual values collaboration, they may seek opportunities to work towards a common goal with those beyond their immediate team, in order to build something better and which would benefit more people

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/>

Activity one

Understanding skills for the workplace (cont'd)

5. Understanding the range of transferable skills

- If students have access to PCs or tablets, ask them to load the [Wheel of strengths](#) tool and individually try it, whilst noting down the skills they chose. Otherwise, load the tool at the front of the room and use the first screen to display the fifteen skills and definitions
- Students should identify five skills that they think are most valuable for impressing employers, even if these are not the top ones they chose for themselves on the tool. Get them to discuss some key questions around these skills with a partner or as a small group, such as:

Were there any skills that they agreed were really important?

Were there any that their partner(s) suggested, that they didn't consider?

Do they already have these skills, and what opportunities do they have to develop these skills?

How could some of these skills be transferred to different parts of their lives, or different work scenarios?

- If students need further clarification about these types of skills, give them some additional examples such as listening and presenting (communication), problem solving and aiming high (proactivity). You could use a lesson from the [Core transferable skills](#) suite for a more detailed introduction.

Extension

Explore the different changes that may happen in the workplace, e.g. new staff, absence, new policies, etc. You could also then explore ways to help a person with autism deal with these changes.

You can find more information on how employers can manage someone with autism [here](#).

Activity summary

- Summarise by explaining that personal values are a set of beliefs held by the individual shaped by perceptions and past experience. They influence and guide both behaviour and attitude in a range of situations. Skills are abilities that are more likely to have been intentionally learnt and developed over time. Skills are objective, so they are easier to see and measure
- To help students understand how to build and demonstrate their personal values, take a look at the [Personal Values Quiz](#) which presents students with workplace scenarios that demonstrate values which companies look for in their employees

Activity two

Demonstrating your skills

1. Assessing the skills you have




- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Self-awareness – Many autistic people may find it challenging to become self-aware and to be able to identify their skills/strengths and areas where they may need to improve. Some support may be needed with skills and strengths as some may feel awkward and embarrassed talking about themselves. Others may come across as overly confident but this can be anxiety driven because they feel the need to compete with others
- Discuss with students the importance of being self-aware. Explain the need to identify the areas where their skills are strong and the areas they need to develop. Present the next activity as a tool to start them thinking about how they demonstrate and evidence these skills. Examples could include work experience, part time jobs they've had or their secondary education
- Give out the **Which skills are your strongest? student worksheet** which reflects the skills on the 'Wheel of strengths' tool and ask students to evaluate their skill levels in these areas. The scale runs from "Not a skill I practise much" at the lowest end, to "I'm proficient in this skill" at the highest end
- Next ask students to reflect on the skills on the **Which skills are your strongest? student worksheet**, using a different colour, that they rated least highly. This will help them identify areas that they need to develop. They can record these with ideas for development on their worksheet
- Show **slide 3** and talk through the examples. Do they have evidence from friends, family or classmates that supports their view of the skills they have rated highest, for example feedback or comments they've received, or can they demonstrate the skills through something they have delivered? Get them to record evidence of each skill they rated highly on their worksheet. In addition, help students to identify and record a workplace benefit for each skill
- Show **slide 4** and discuss ideas for how they might develop their skills. Move on to **slide 5**, and use the examples to suggest actions they can take to practise their skills. Ask students to record these in the worksheet table

Extension

Suggest that students ask others who know them well, e.g. family, close friends or teachers, to complete the **Which skills are your strongest? student worksheet** on their behalf. Explain that our self-perception of our skills is subjective and that feedback we receive can give us pointers for development

Activity two

Demonstrating your skills (cont'd)

2. Presenting evidence when applying for jobs

- Explain that in recruitment situations, students may be asked questions that are specifically designed to find out if the applicant has the skills and attributes that are needed for the role. It is not enough to prepare a generic answer, e.g. "I work well when I'm part of a team". They need to have an example that supports their statement with evidence, e.g. "... I demonstrated this when I was asked to..."
- Give the students the **Tackling those tricky questions student worksheet**. Talk through some of the questions on the sheet. Start by challenging them to think about which skill each question is trying to assess. You could share an example of your own that you feel comfortable talking about, e.g. misunderstanding some instructions for a task you've been given
- Now ask the students to think about an experience they could include in an answer to each of the questions. Explain that as a result of this exercise, they will have completed some valuable preparation for their CV's and interviews. To further embed learning, you could ask students to develop their own interview role-play scenarios in pairs, where one person is the interviewer and the other is the candidate. The interviewee must think of the best way of articulating and expressing their values and skills

Extension

Try these next steps to get students developing new skills, identifying their attributes and values, and building on those they already have:

- Taking part in social action is a practical way to develop key transferable skills and values like communication, leadership, compassion and empathy. Activities could include volunteering for a local or global organisation, joining a community group or setting up their own campaign for a cause that matters to them. You can use the LifeSkills [Social action toolkit](#) for support in setting up a programme in your institution or use [these videos](#) to inspire your students



Summary

- Summarise by explaining that it's important to develop skills in a variety of areas so that a broad skill set is built that could transfer to a range of employment possibilities. For example, skills developed from volunteering could potentially be applied to a paid role
- Ask students to reflect on the key learnings they have drawn from this session. Students may wish to revisit the questions answered at the start of the lesson to see how their skills, knowledge and understanding have progressed
- You may also want to ask students to reflect on their learnings using the following focus points:
 - Identify three skills you have learnt about and/or developed in this lesson
 - Consider one way in which your perceptions or understanding of these skills have changed – has anything you learnt today surprised you?
 - Think about one question you still have about workplace skills
- These questions should then be revisited the next time you run a session around this topic



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Recognising skills for success in the workplace

Which skills are your strongest?

It's important to have a good perception of which skills you are strong in and which you need to develop further.

Skills	Not a skill I practise much  I'm proficient in this skill			
Organisation				
Teamwork				
Presenting				
Aiming high				
Problem solving				
Communication skills				
Creative thinking				
Numeracy				
Staying positive				
Decision making				
Leadership				
Analytical				
Resilience				
Proactivity				
Innovative				

Think about what evidence you have to support your opinion on skills strengths, e.g. have you had feedback from someone or an experience to draw on? Enter your evidence here.

Top skills	Evidence	How would this skill be a benefit in the workplace?

Skill	Development strategies

Recognising skills for success in the workplace

Tackling those tricky questions

Your first task when preparing your CV will be to research the transferable skills a particular employer or industry is expecting. If you are successful at securing an interview, you should prepare to showcase these skills. Employers will often ask questions at interview that are specifically designed to see whether you have the right skills and attributes for the role. Here are some typical questions that you could be asked. Think about how you might respond to these. What examples could you give as evidence that you have the skills?

Have you ever made a mistake? If so, how did you handle it and what did you learn from the experience?

Example I could give:

Key points of my answer:

Give me an example of when you've worked in a team, what skills you used and what the result was.

Key points of my answer:

Key points of my answer:

Give an example of a goal you've achieved and how you managed it.

Key points of my answer:

Key points of my answer:

What steps do you take if you encounter a problem?

Key points of my answer:

Key points of my answer:

Are you a good listener? Give an example of a time when you did or didn't listen and what you learnt from it.

Key points of my answer:

Key points of my answer:
