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## 10 skills employers look for in college graduates

Highlight these abilities to help yourself land a job

Content provided by Daniel Bortz, Monster contributor  
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All set to land your first job out of college? Get ready to put your talent to the test. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' Job Outlook 2020 survey, there are a handful of specific skills employers look for in new grads.

## **1. PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS**

Nine in 10 employers (91.2%) want to see new college graduates tout excellent problem-solving skills. Many hiring managers use behavioral interview questions—phrases such as “tell me about a time when” or “give me an example of”—to assess a job candidate's problem-solving ability. Thus, you'll want to prepare anecdotes that paint you as a solution finder.

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You don't need job experience to provide proof that you're a problem solver, says Los Angeles-based career coach Nancy Karas. “Think about times where you were proactive, innovative or highly responsive to a challenge,” like that time you helped solve a customer complaint while working at the campus coffee shop, Karas says. Even better: Show that you took the initiative to identify a problem and then solved it.

## **2. ABILITY TO WORK IN A TEAM**

It goes without saying that nobody likes the employee who wants to hog the spotlight. But unlike your career as a student, where you're really the only one who can make or break your success, the workplace depends on teams of people to get the job done. No surprise, then, that 86.3% of hiring managers want to know you can collaborate well with lots of different personalities.

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You'll need to learn how to delegate, take direction, value differences of opinion and play to your and your coworkers' strengths and weaknesses.

### **3. STRONG WORK ETHIC**

You need to be committed to your job responsibilities and understand that performing your role is more than just means to a paycheck—after all, a company stands for something beyond business and so should you. That's why 80.4% of hiring managers want to see new hires demonstrate a strong work ethic. Show up on time, be engaged in your work and act with integrity.

### **4. ANALYTICAL SKILLS**

One in eight hiring managers (79.4%) want to hire entry-level workers who possess analytical skills, meaning they're searching for critical thinkers—people who know how to gather and evaluate information and then make good decisions based on that intel.

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### **5. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

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Good communication is always going to be among the top skills employers look for. The survey found that 77.5% of managers feel writing proficiency is the most desirable hard skill among recent college graduates. Therefore, submitting a well-crafted cover letter is crucial.

You'll want to highlight experiences on your resume that demonstrate your writing skills. If you volunteered to be the scribe for a group project in college, for example, include that on your resume, advises Dawn Bugni, a professional resume writer in Atkinson, North Carolina. And depending on the nature of the industry, you might also submit writing samples with your application.

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## **6. LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

It's a tall order: 72.5% of hiring managers want potential hires with great leadership skills. Believe it or not, there are ways you can show possible employers that you have leadership potential before you even enter the workforce.

If you held a leadership role in college (e.g., president of the French club), highlight it on your resume. If you emerged as the informal leader on a group project, talk about the experience during the job interview.

## **7. VERBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Seven in 10 hiring managers (69.6%) surveyed said good verbal communication skills are a must-have for new grads. Communication skills set the tone for how people perceive you and help you build relationships with coworkers.

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Verbal communication prowess is best demonstrated during job interviews. Presenting answers to interview questions clearly goes a long way. You should also ask job interviewers open-ended questions to show that you're engaged.

## **8. INITIATIVE**

Tied with verbal communication skills, 69.6% of hiring managers reported they want newly minted college graduates who know how to take initiative. This is where the maxim "Show them, don't just tell them" applies. In the experience section of your resume, cite an example of a time when you deal with a difficult situation in a direct way or a time when being proactive enabled you to head off a problem.

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## 9. DETAIL-ORIENTED

According to the survey, 67.6% of managers are looking for new grads that have meticulous attention to detail. As a result, make sure your resume is impeccable, free of typos and grammatical errors and organized with the use of clear, concise, and effective language. As Monster's resume expert Kim Isaacs puts it: "You want your resume to be as perfect as humanly possible."

## 10. TECHNICAL SKILLS

Many industries, not just jobs in the technology sector, call for professionals with technical abilities. Case in point: 65.7% of hiring managers said new grads should possess technical skills. Describe how you've applied your technical skills in the past. For instance, if your resume lists that you have Java experience, it should also describe how utilized the program on a particular project in college.

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