

Changing Careers: Identifying Your Transferable Skills

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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1. Choosing a New Kind of Work

Introduction

Coming to a new country can often mean a change in career for new immigrants. When you first arrive in Canada, you may need to consider working in a job that is different from your previous occupation.

You already possess a number of skills and attributes required to be successful in this new career.

Taking the time to explore the skills you already have is an important part of your job search process. This guide offers you strategies for identifying your transferable skills to help you find a new kind of work.

Tip:

The top skills Canadian hiring managers and recruiters look for include:

- *Communication skills (oral and written); active listening*
- *Teamwork/group/interpersonal skills*
- *Leadership skills*
- *Adaptability, flexibility & resiliency*
- *Analytical skills & critical thinking*
- *Organizational skills & problem solving*
- *Computer literacy*
- *Work-ethic traits, such as drive, self-motivation, initiative, reliability, positive attitude toward work*

Source: Indeed.com

<https://ca.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/skills-employers-look-for>

2. What are Transferable Skills?

Transferable skills are competencies that can be used in many situations and many types of work. While some of these skills can be taught, most are gained through experience. They are skills you acquire throughout your life – through paid employment, volunteer work, school, community activities and/or life experiences.

Most jobs require two types of skill sets:

- *Technical or job-specific skills:* mandatory job requirements such as a degree or diploma, specialized training, etc
- *Non-technical or soft skills:* skills that can be easily used in more than one work environment. These are your transferable skills

Transferable skills include a wide range of abilities such as:

- report writing
- negotiating
- giving presentations
- budgeting
- using the telephone effectively
- dealing with clients
- problem solving
- working in a team
- operating office equipment
- flexibility

For further information about types of transferable skills see:

- **Transferable Skills for the New Normal, Canadian Immigrant**
<https://canadianimmigrant.ca/careers-and-education/transferable-skills-for-the-new-normal>

- **Top 10 Transferable Skills You Need To Highlight In Your Resume, Agilus**

<https://www.agilus.ca/blog/top-10-transferable-skills-you-need-to-highlight-in-your-resume>

- **Transferable Skills, Carleton University Student Services**

<https://students.carleton.ca/degree-to-future/know-your-skills/>

3. Identifying Your Transferable Skills

All your life, you've been acquiring skills that can be transferred to a new career. When exploring your transferable skills think about all of your life experiences, not just your employment history. For example, think about the skills you've acquired through the following activities:

- current & previous employment
- school
- volunteering
- hobbies or interests
- parenting or caring for family members
- sports participation
- other community involvement

Not sure what skills you have?

There are a number of tools that can assist you with identifying your transferable skills.

The following resources can help to identify your transferable skills:

- **Employability Skills Toolkit. Conference Board of Canada**

<https://www.conferenceboard.ca/futureskillscentre/tools/employability-skills>

- **Know Your Core Skills & How to Sell Them, ALIS Alberta**
<https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/know-your-core-skills-and-how-to-sell-them/>
 - **Skills Quiz**
<https://alis.alberta.ca/careerinsite/know-yourself/skills-quiz/>
- **Essential Skills Mobile App, Skills Competencies Canada**
<https://mobile-app.skillscompetencescanada.com/index.php?l=e&o=y>

4. Exploring Careers that Match Your Skills

Once you have identified your transferable skills, how do you find careers that require these skills? There are a number of resources that can help you match skills to careers.

Tip:

If you already have a potential career in mind, try searching a selection of job postings to see what skills are consistently highlighted by employers.

A good starting place is a general job site such as Indeed.ca [<https://ca.indeed.com/>].

The tools below can help you explore possible career options:

- **Career Discovery Quizzes. WorkBC**
<https://careerdiscoveryquizzes.workbc.ca/>
By taking each quiz, you'll be able to identify your strengths, work preferences and interests and then see which careers might suit you best.
- **Career Planning Quizzes, Job Bank Canada**
<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/career-planning/quizzes>
- **Soft Skills Custom List. O*NET Online**
<https://www.onetonline.org/skills/soft/>
The Skills Search function helps you use your skills to identify occupations for exploration.

5. Presenting Your Skills to Employers

Even if you do not have direct experience in a specific profession, that doesn't mean you lack the necessary skills to succeed in the job. Your job is to convince potential employers that you have the skills that they are looking for.

In resumes, cover letters, and during interviews, you should always portray your skills as applicable to the job you seek.

Use the job description or advertisement to understand and prioritize the transferable skills the employer might value most. Then include in these skills in your resume by showing how your experience matches what the employer is seeking.

Remember that your cover letter is your introduction. If you are applying for a position that is not directly related to your previous work experience, include a paragraph in the cover letter that connects your transferable skills to the job description.

Tip:

Use networking to find out what skills employers are looking for!

Speak with employers and workers in your desired field, attend industry events and connect with industry associations to learn which skills are important. Once you have a good understanding of desirable skills, you'll know which ones to emphasize in your resume and cover letter.

The sources below provide specific examples how to include transferable skills in your resume and cover letter:

- **50+ Transferable Skills for your Resume. LiveCareer**
<https://www.livecareer.com/resources/resumes/basics/transferable-skills-set>
- **How to Demonstrate Transferable Skills on your Resume. Flexjobs**
<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/how-to-demonstrate-transferable-skills-on-your-resume/>
- **10 Skills for Cover Letters. Indeed**
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/cover-letter-skills>
- **Transferable Skills Cover Letter Examples. The Balance**
<https://www.thebalancemoney.com/transferable-skills-cover-letter-example-2060265>

6. Additional Resources

Still looking for more information? Vancouver Public Library has many books on changing careers. Use the VPL catalogue and search subject "Career Changes." Or try looking at the following resources:

- ***What Color is Your Parachute?*** / Richard N. Bolles. Central Library. 650.14205 B69w
- ***No Canadian Experience, Eh?*** / Daisy Wright. 2011. Central Library. 650.142 W94n1.
- ***Expert Resumes for Career Changers*** / Wendy S. Enelow. 2010. Central Library. 650.142 E56ec1
- ***Networking for Employment: A Guide for Newcomers to British Columbia***
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>

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- **Getting Canadian Work Experience. Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre**
<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>

- **Career Cruising**
<https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

Available from the VPL Digital Library | Explore our Digital Library page:
Click on “Explore My Interests” and answer questions about your likes and dislikes to find careers that match up with your interests. Free registration required to complete assessment.

Note: *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database.*

**Questions? Please ask the Information Staff in the Central Branch,
Vancouver Public Library or telephone 604-331-3603.**

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>