SKILLS for SUCCESS

Guidebook

Learn

Understand the most in-demand skills employers are looking for and discover the specific skills needed for your personal career goals.

Evaluate

Assess the skills you have and your current level of proficiency.

Build

Discover ways to build skills and create a plan.

Highlight

Display the skills you've gained in your job search materials and communicate these skills to employers.

Skills for Success
GUIDEBOOK OVERVIEW

For more than 60 years, research has supported that one of the main reasons students attend college is to get a good job or find a meaningful career. This guidebook will help you to start focusing on your skills as a way to be a competitive candidate for the 10-20 different jobs you will have in your future and help you to enter the job search with confidence and choices.

Specifically, this guidebook will help you to understand

- Which skills you've already developed: Skills Inventory Worksheet

- Which skills employers value most: Foundational Skills

- How well you have developed the skills: Foundational Skills List and Gap Analysis

- What specialized skills are needed for jobs you are interested in: Request a skills report

- Ideas for building and strengthening skills during your time at CU: Gaining Professional Experience

- What are your next steps: Personal Skills Plan

- How to track your progress: Skills Progress Tracker

While we focus a lot on the power of skills to get you a job, intentionally learning skills now gives you a lot more than just an advantage in the job market. It also gives you more

- Choice

- Clarity

- Connections

- Confidence

- Courage

- Comfort with change *(ability to adapt)*

Career Services is here to support you on your skills journey. Feel free to reach out for support as you navigate this process!

LiveChat: *colorado.edu/career*
Phone: 303-492-6541

Learn

Understand the most in-demand skills employers are looking for and discover the specific skills needed for your personal career goals.

Foundational
SKILLS

Certain skills are relevant to any job in any industry. Building these skills while at CU Boulder can help you be a strong candidate for any position you pursue. They will allow you to make a valuable impact throughout your life in any context.

CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Exercise sound reasoning to analyze information, make decisions and overcome challenges.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Conceive of and develop ideas that lead to tangible outcomes such as content, products or processes. Practice ingenuity to make something unique, faster, more efficient or to address an identified need.

COMMUNICATION

Convey thoughts and ideas clearly and concisely in written, oral and visual forms for people to make meaning and build connection.

TEAMWORK

Develop authentic, purposeful and mutually beneficial relationships with people of diverse perspectives in which all parties choose to cooperate and commit to achieving shared goals.

CAREER AND SELF DEVELOPMENT

Identify and articulate your skills, strengths, knowledge and experience, and pursue roles and opportunities that align. Develop a growth mindset, seek feedback and identify areas of personal growth to help you pivot and navigate transitions over the course of your career.

LEVERAGING DATA

Gather, manage and/or examine relevant data sets for patterns, correlations and trends. Share data with stakeholders using effective methods to communicate useful insights. Make data-informed decisions.

TECHNOLOGY

Understand and leverage technologies to solve problems, complete tasks and accomplish goals. Gain familiarity with and build competencies in industry or company specific software programs.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Demonstrate openness, inclusivity, sensitivity and the ability to interact respectfully with people of diverse identities and understand individuals' differences.

LEADERSHIP

Recognize, respect and leverage the unique strengths of individuals from all backgrounds to achieve a shared vision and common goals. Use interpersonal skills to motivate and develop others. Organize, prioritize and delegate work for others.

INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Commonly known as professionalism. Maintain personal accountability and effective work habits that demonstrate interests in the larger community and the ability to learn from mistakes.

Source: This list is adapted from research by the National Association of Colleges and Employers and Lightcast.

Request a
SKILLS REPORT

SKILLS for SUCCESS

Skills reports are a great way to take the first step towards your potential future career. CU has partnered with Lightcast to help you get started in your career path.

Lightcast is a company whose primary goal is to find out what employers are looking for in job candidates all across the United States. Every day, Lightcast collects millions of online job postings from up to 50,000 sources like job boards, employer sites, newspapers and public agencies. Then they comb through all the data to find specific skills, skill clusters, education, certifications, experience and work activities required for the job. They also collect information about salary, number of openings and job type.

TYPES OF **REPORTS**

SKILLS REPORTS

If you have a particular job in mind, we can find the exact skills employers are looking for. This report tells you which skills were requested in actual job postings over the past year and ranks the importance of those skills for a particular role. Once you know which skills employers are looking for in your desired career, you can get a jumpstart by building them while you are at CU. Your skills report can also tell you other important data about the job you want. You'll see the top industries and employers for your occupation, the top locations in which employers are hiring, the projected growth of the occupation and salary averages, and be introduced to other related jobs.

INDUSTRY REPORTS

You may not have an exact occupation you are looking into but may want to know more about an industry and what types of jobs are available in that field. Industry reports give information on what kinds of jobs there are in a particular industry based on your degree level. You can review this report to get an idea of what kind of jobs you may want to aim for within that industry. Once you have an occupation in mind, request a skills report to start building your personalized Skills for Success skills plan.

When you request a report, you will fill out a short survey that includes some basic information (name, student ID, major, school year) as well as a few questions about your future career plans. This information helps us tailor the report to information that is most useful to you.

SKILLS REPORT REQUEST FORM

Evaluate

Assess the skills you have and your current
level of proficiency.

Skills Inventory
WORSHEET

In order to take inventory of your current skills, it can be helpful to reflect on your most impactful educational, leisure, volunteer and work experiences. Take a moment to list your 6 most rewarding experiences in the chart below. Be sure to consider internships, part-time jobs, class projects, volunteer roles, extra-curricular activities and competitions you have participated in.

Now that you have these experiences in mind, select the 4 that were most enjoyable and rewarding and list them in column one. Then, in the second column, make a list of all the tasks that you personally performed during each of the different experiences. Lastly, make a list of all the individual skills you used while carrying out those tasks. These are considered transferable skills because you built them in one setting and can apply them in a variety of different settings in the future.

Experiences	Your Tasks and Accomplishments	Skills Used
Example: Hospital Volunteer	Example tasks: Welcomed patients and guests Answered questions and provided directions Confirmed appointments using the computer database Transported patients by wheelchair if necessary Worked with a team of volunteers to coordinate all tasks each shift Delivered gifts to patient rooms Communicated in Spanish with Spanish-speaking visitors Completed additional tasks as needed depending on the day Showed up on time and covered shifts for other volunteers	Example Skills: Communication, Customer service, Teamwork, Spanish fluency, Computer database, Adaptability, Problem solve Provide support, Wheelchair usage, Time management

Experiences	Your Tasks and Accomplishments	Skills Used

Foundational Skills List and Gap Analysis
WORSHEET

SKILLS *for* **SUCCESS**

The following list is a compilation of the most in-demand skills that employers seek in job candidates. See how well your current skills line up with the foundational skills list and make note of any gaps. By addressing these gaps and building new skills now, you can increase the quality and quantity of job opportunities available to you at graduation and at times of transition during your career.

1. Take a look at the sample behaviors for each of the 10 foundational skills below.

2. Consider how much experience you have with each of these skills and how often you display the sample behaviors. Evaluate if that skill needs improvement in your life and work by checking either the "Needs Work" box or the "I've Got This" box for each skill. Once you have evaluated your experience in each skill area, you will have an idea of which skills you may want to put some work into strengthening.

3. List the skills you would like to focus on at the bottom of the form and choose just one to pursue next. Don't try to do it all at once! Building skills is a process we need to do throughout our lives and easing into the process will help you not get overwhelmed.

CAREER AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Identify and articulate your skills, strengths, knowledge and experience, and pursue roles and opportunities that align. Develop a growth mindset, seek feedback and identify areas of personal growth to help you pivot and navigate transitions over the course of your career.

☐ **Basic**

☐ **Intermediate**

☐ **Advanced**

☐ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

☐ Show an awareness of personal strengths and areas for development

☐ Identify areas for continual growth while pursuing and applying feedback

☐ Develop goals and plans for your future career

☐ Professionally and respectfully advocate for yourself and others

☐ Display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn

☐ Assume duties or positions that will help you progress

☐ Establish, maintain and/or leverage relationships with people who can help you professionally

☐ Seek and embrace development opportunities

☐ Voluntarily participate in further education, training or other events to support your career

COMMUNICATION

Convey thoughts and ideas clearly and concisely in written, oral and visual forms for people to make meaning and build connection.

☐ **Basic**

☐ **Intermediate**

☐ **Advanced**

☐ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

☐ Understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written and non-verbal/body language, abilities

☐ Employ active listening, persuasion and influencing skills

☐ Communicate in a clear and organized manner so that others can effectively understand

☐ Frame communication with respect to diversity of learning styles, varied individual communication abilities and cultural differences

☐ Ask clarifying questions for specific information from supervisors, specialists and others

☐ Promptly inform relevant others when needing guidance with assigned tasks

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Conceive of and develop ideas that lead to tangible outcomes such as content, products or processes. Practice ingenuity to make something unique, faster or more efficient or to address an identified need.

☐ **Basic**

☐ **Intermediate**

☐ **Advanced**

☐ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

☐ Evaluate current circumstances and visualize alternatives

☐ Challenge the status quo

☐ Take initiative and suggest different ways of thinking about ideas or projects

☐ Demonstrate curiosity and a passion for lifelong learning

☐ Develop new skills and show generosity in using your skills to address team needs

☐ Imagine various possibilities and the seemingly impossible

CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Exercise sound reasoning to analyze information, make decisions and overcome challenges.

☐ **Basic**

☐ **Intermediate**

☐ **Advanced**

☐ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

☐ Make decisions and solve problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment

☐ Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand a problem

☐ Proactively anticipate needs and prioritize action steps

☐ Accurately summarize and interpret data with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes

☐ Effectively communicate actions and rationale, recognizing the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of stakeholders

☐ Multi-task well in a fast-paced environment

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Demonstrate openness, inclusivity, sensitivity and the ability to interact respectfully with people of diverse identities and understand individuals' differences.

□ **Basic**

□ **Intermediate**

□ **Advanced**

□ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

□ Demonstrate flexibility by adapting to diverse environments

□ Seek global cross-cultural interactions and experiences that enhance your understanding of people from different demographic groups

□ Solicit and use feedback from multiple cultural perspectives to make inclusive and equity-minded decisions

□ Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking

□ Advocate for inclusion, equitable practices, justice and empowerment for historically marginalized communities

□ Actively contribute to inclusive and equitable practices that influence individual and systemic change

□ Identify resources and eliminate barriers resulting from individual and systemic racism, inequities and biases

□ Address systems of privilege that limit opportunities for members of historically marginalized communities

INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Maintain personal accountability and effective work habits that demonstrate interests in the larger community and the ability to learn from mistakes. Often referred to as professionalism.

□ **Basic**

□ **Intermediate**

□ **Advanced**

□ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

□ Act equitably with integrity and accountability to self, others and the organization

□ Maintain a positive personal brand in alignment with organization and personal career values

□ Be present and prepared

□ Demonstrate dependability (e.g., report consistently for work or meetings)

□ Prioritize and complete tasks to accomplish organizational goals

□ Consistently meet goals and expectations

□ Demonstrate attention to detail with few/no errors in work

□ Show a high level of dedication toward doing a good job

LEADERSHIP

Recognize, respect and leverage the unique strengths of individuals from all backgrounds to achieve a shared vision and common goals. Use interpersonal skills to motivate and develop others. Organize, prioritize and delegate work for others.

Continues on next page ...

□ **Basic**

□ **Intermediate**

□ **Advanced**

□ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

☐ Plan, initiate, manage, complete and evaluate projects

☐ Inspire, persuade and motivate self and others under a shared vision

☐ Seek out and leverage diverse resources and feedback from others to inform direction

☐ Use innovative thinking to go beyond traditional methods

☐ Serve as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude

☐ Motivate and inspire others by encouraging them and by building mutual trust

LEVERAGING DATA

Gather, manage and/or examine relevant data sets for patterns, correlations and trends. Share data appropriately with stakeholders using effective methods to communicate useful insights. Recommend and/or make data-informed decisions.

☐ **Basic**

☐ **Intermediate**

☐ **Advanced**

☐ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

☐ Find information relevant to the task at hand offered by credible sources

☐ Use software programs and tools to ethically manipulate raw data to uncover insights

☐ Organize and display data in ways that will engage necessary audiences

☐ Research and incorporate data and evidence-based insights when making decisions

TEAMWORK

Develop authentic, purposeful and mutually beneficial relationships with people of diverse perspectives in which all parties choose to cooperate and commit to achieving shared goals.

☐ **Basic**

☐ **Intermediate**

☐ **Advanced**

☐ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

☐ Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting

☐ Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience

☐ Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables

☐ Readily offer personal strengths, knowledge and talents to complement those of others

☐ Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile

☐ Cooperate with others to achieve common goals

☐ Build strong, positive working relationships with supervisor and team members/coworkers

TECHNOLOGY

Leverage existing digital technologies effectively to solve problems, complete tasks and accomplish goals. Gain familiarity with and build competencies in industry- or company-specific software programs.

☐ **Basic**

☐ **Intermediate**

☐ **Advanced**

☐ **Expert**

Sample Behaviors

☐ Navigate change and be open to learning new technologies

☐ Use technology to improve efficiency and productivity of your work

☐ Identify appropriate technology for completing specific tasks

☐ Manage technology to integrate information to support relevant, effective and timely decision-making

☐ Quickly adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies

☐ Manipulate information, construct ideas and use technology to achieve strategic goals

(OPTIONAL) YOUR CAREER-SPECIFIC SKILL

_____

☐ **Basic**

☐ **Intermediate**

☐ **Advanced**

☐ **Expert**

Do you have a particular career or job goal in mind? Request a skills report by completing the form on the Career Services website to see exactly which skills hiring managers seek for that type of work. If there is a targeted skill for that role you don't currently possess, add it to your list and start building it. That will help you stand out from the crowd in your job search!

Do some sleuthing! What exactly is this skill? Where can you get training and/or experience? How can you highlight it once you have it?

Build

Discover ways to build skills and create a plan.

Gaining Professional
EXPERIENCE

SKILLS *for* **SUCCESS**

You do not need all of these experiences and you do not even need to hit each step to find professional success. However, the more you do, you will have

More refined skills | **More connections** | **Better chances of finding a job post-graduation**

5 **CAREER STARTERS**
Full-time professional employment, founding a company

4 **ADVANCED**
Paid internships, research, freelance work, professional jobs, entrepreneurship competitions

3 **CAREER-FOCUSED**
Micro-internships, unpaid internships, volunteering, capstone courses

2 **INTRODUCTORY**
Professional projects, industry competitions, hackathons, part-time jobs

1 **EXPLORATION**
Job simulations, job shadowing, mentorship, online skill-building courses

CU RESOURCES TO **BUILD YOUR EXPERIENCE**

EXPLORATION | The Forage, Forever Buffs Network, Coursera, LinkedIn Learning

INTRODUCTORY | Riipen, Hack CU, student employment

CAREER-FOCUSED | Handshake, career fairs, capstone courses, Volunteer Resource Center

ADVANCED | Handshake, career fairs, Startup Summer, New Venture Challenge, Catalyze CU, UROP, internship courses

CAREER STARTERS | Handshake, career fairs, Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Personal Skills
PLAN

SKILLS for SUCCESS

Now that you know which skills you have, which ones employers are looking for and how many ways you can build your skills, it's time to get your plan together. Follow the instructions below to complete your skills plan. Detailed instructions follow the grid if you want more guidance.

SKILL AND DEADLINE	WHERE I'LL BUILD THIS SKILL (GOALS)	HOW I'LL PRACTICE THIS SKILL (ACTIVITIES)	WHEN I NEED TO GET THESE DONE (INDIVIDUAL DEADLINES)	WHAT I NEED TO DO NEXT (IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS)
Can I start building this now? Do I need to apply to an opportunity to build this skill and can I join at any time?	Do I have basic skills here or do I need to start from scratch? Can practicing this skill be worked into something I'm already doing?	Which specific roles, projects or activities can I get involved with to use and hone this skill?	Work backward from your overall deadline in column 1 to see when you need to start the individual steps.	Are there people I need to contact for an opportunity? Do I need to research places to build this skill?
Example Skill: Communication Overall Deadline: June	Write student club newsletter Emcee bingo night at work	Contribute to 3 newsletters Host weekly for fall semester	Spring Break December 31	Contact current leadership for info on how to get involved with the newsletter Ask boss to put me in the rotation for emceeing

Column 1 | Skill and Deadline: Refer to your skills gap analysis and personalized skills report (if you requested one) and list the skills you plan to build in the first column of the table along with the date you'd like to be able to put each skill on your resume. Think about the balance of your skills as well. Are you working toward having both technical and human skills as well as any specialized skills requested for your desired job?

Column 2 | Where I'll Build This: You'll need to decide how and where you want to put this skill to use. If possible, it can be efficient to weave the practice of a skill into a role you already have. You might ask to be part of an effort at work or structure a class project to include elements of a skill you want to practice. If your current involvement doesn't have an opportunity to work on a skill or you need a specific context in which to practice, you may need to pursue a new activity. The Skills for Success individual skills pages have ideas of where to build foundational skills. For skills specific to your desired career, you may need to brainstorm places where you could get practice. People working in the field you want to enter may have ideas about where you can build skills specific to that job. Join the Forever Buffs Network to connect with an alum working in a role you'd love to have.

Column 3 | How I'll Practice This Skill: Setting specific goals will help you make progress and ensure you're getting experience related to that particular skill. If you need ideas on what type of experiences to pursue, check out the rubric for any of the foundational skills you are targeting. They include lots of examples of this skill in action and will also give you an idea of which

experiences would be rated at a beginner, intermediate and advanced level. Try to get a number of experiences putting the skill into practice; that will help you refine your abilities and ensure you can translate your use of the skill to a variety of contexts.

Column 4 | Individual Deadlines: To make sure your skill sets look like you want them to by the time you're ready to go on the job market, start with the end in mind. When will you graduate or want to move on to your next job? Work backward from there. Are you starting from scratch with a skill or honing one you already have? Will some skills require more time to learn? Do you want to build a skill over a break or incorporate opportunities to practice a skill into your activities within the semester? Set deadlines for each skill to keep yourself on track. If you can't get everything built by graduation, that's okay. Upskilling is a process you'll do throughout your career. Focus on what will have the most impact now and get to the other skills when you can.

Column 5 | What I Need to Do Next: Your next steps should be very specific and able to be accomplished in a short amount of time (say, within 1-7 days). Building skills is a big learning experience and it's important to break the steps down enough that you can see your progress quickly. Are there people you need to connect with? Programs you need to apply to? Permission you need to get?

Need help? Drop into the Career Services Skills for Success Lab to get your questions answered.

Highlight

Display the skills you've gained in your job search materials and communicate these skills to employers.

Skills Progress
TRACKER

Human or technical, foundational or tailored skills… keep track of all your hard work using this simple form. This information will help you highlight your experience and skills when preparing to go on the job market. Use this information to help you write your resume, complete your Linkedin profile or prepare interview answers.

Human Skill: A skill that impacts how you show up at work and how you interact with other people or your team.

Technical Skill: A skill that allows you to do tasks specific to the field you want to enter.

SKILL NAME	WHERE DID I BUILD THIS? The program or experience name	EXAMPLES OF WHEN I USED THIS SKILL	CURRENT LEVEL OF SKILL PROFICIENCY	WHERE IS THIS SKILL REPRESENTED IN MY JOB SEARCH MATERIALS? You can include once you are at the Intermediate level
Human Skills				
Example Communication	Barista at Starbucks	I engaged in active listening and clear communication with diverse clientele each day taking drink orders and creating a pleasant client experience.	□ Basic □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Expert	□ LinkedIn □ Resume □ Interview answer prepped
			□ Basic □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Expert	□ LinkedIn □ Resume □ Interview answer prepped
			□ Basic □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Expert	□ LinkedIn □ Resume □ Interview answer prepped

			□ Basic □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Expert	□ LinkedIn □ Resume □ Interview answer prepped
			□ Basic □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Expert	□ LinkedIn □ Resume □ Interview answer prepped
Technical Skills				
			□ Basic □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Expert	□ LinkedIn □ Resume □ Interview answer prepped
			□ Basic □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Expert	□ LinkedIn □ Resume □ Interview answer prepped
			□ Basic □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Expert	□ LinkedIn □ Resume □ Interview answer prepped

S.T.A.R.T.
INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

SKILLS *for* **SUCCESS**

Hiring professionals often ask interview questions designed to explore specific examples of your skills and work style by asking about your past experiences. The S.T.A.R.T. format is a useful technique when answering these behavioral interview questions. See the example below.

SITUATION: Set the stage. Provide a brief and specific overview of an event, project or challenge you faced.

TASK: Describe the specific goal you were working toward within the broader situation.

ACTION: Describe the steps you took to achieve the goal.

RESULT: Describe the outcome of your actions. Did you achieve the goal? Why or why not? This is your time to take credit for your work and show what you learned.

TIE BACK TO POSITION: Draw a clear connection between your contributions in the experience you just described to how you would approach your work in the role you are interviewing for.

EXAMPLE INTERVIEW **QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES**

Tell me about a time when you used creativity and innovation to solve a problem

S When I was a barista in college, we ran out of pumpkin spice syrup on Halloween and customers were outraged.

T I needed to find a way to keep my customers happy since it was our fault for not ordering enough syrup. I decided to create a new seasonal beverage using the supplies we had on hand.

A First, I took inventory of the flavors we had available in large quantity. We then tested out a few different flavor combinations until we found a nice autumnal flavor. Next, we developed a recipe for the new drink using maple syrup, dark chocolate sauce and oat milk. After creating the drink, we brainstormed possible names for it and landed on "Fallows Eve." Lastly, we offered small samples of the new holiday drink to interested customers to gather input, and immediately "Fallows Eve" was a hit.

R We were then able to give customers an option besides their beloved pumpkin spice latte to continue creating a positive coffee shop experience for everyone. My manager later received positive feedback from customers, and she thanked me for thinking on my feet to resolve the situation. From then on, I was tasked with creating the monthly specialty beverage for our shop.

T If offered this position with your organization, I am confident I would contribute this same level of responsibility and creativity to help address challenges your team and/or clients are experiencing.

SKILLS USED: Creativity and innovation; communication; teamwork; integrity and responsibility; critical thinking; and problem-solving.

S.T.A.R.T.
INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

S

T

A

R

T

SKILLS USED

"Tell me about yourself..."

SKILLS *for* **SUCCESS**

This activity provides a format to help you prepare your response to a common interview and networking question.

	Hi, my name is ...
PAST • Where did you grow up? • Why did you come to CU?	
PRESENT • What is your major? • What are you involved in on and off campus? • What skills are you building?	
FUTURE • Why are you interested in this position? • What are your career goals?	