

What are your employability strengths?

In this activity you will consider:

- What is important to employers and/or clients? (Do some research to find out!)
- What you are good at and what do you want (or need) to improve?
- How you can demonstrate your strengths to potential employers and clients?
- What are your priorities for improvement?
- How can you go about improving your employability?

Important attributes

In 2002, the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry identified what employers are looking for. They highlighted a number of key areas:

- **Communication** that contributes to productive and harmonious relations across employees and customers
- **Initiative and enterprise** that contribute to innovative outcomes
- **Learning** that contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes
- **Planning and organising** that contributes to long and short term strategic planning
- **Problem-solving** that contributes to productive outcomes
- **Self-management** that contributes to employee satisfaction and growth
- **Teamwork** that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes
- **Technology** that contributes to effective execution of task

The same attributes are important when dealing with clients and agents. Here is another list of what recruiters look for, this time from the United States:

Imagination/creativity, **Adaptability/flexibility**, Willingness to learn, Independent working/ autonomy], **Teamwork**, Ability to manage others, **Ability to work under pressure**, Good oral communication Communication in writing for varied purposes/audiences, **Attention to detail**, **Time management**, **Assumption of responsibility**, Ability to make decisions, **Planning**, coordinating and organising, Ability to use new technologies, **Numeracy**.

Your employABILITY thinking

For each theme, identify your strengths and what you want to improve.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>I am good at:</i>	<i>I want to improve:</i>
Communication		
Initiative and enterprise		
Learning		
Planning and organising		
Problem-solving		

Self-management		
Teamwork		
Technology		

Discuss your responses with one or two other students – what are the main similarities or differences in what you are good at and what you want to improve? How did you know what to write - were you guessing to some extent? Take some time to reflect on your strengths and areas for development. Align this with the requirements of your field. This might mean doing some research to determine what strengths are most valued.

Demonstrating what you are good at

Often, when applying for work, interviewers ask us to provide evidence of our strengths. Evidence includes examples of how we gained that skill or ways in which we have applied it successfully. If you have an ePortfolio, start collecting this evidence and place it in there; if not, put your evidence in a safe place.

From the previous activity, choose two things that you think of as strengths. Think about what you could say to an interviewer to demonstrate your expertise.

<i>I am good at</i>	<i>I could demonstrate this by</i>

Discuss your responses with someone else. What do you think about the evidence they use? How could you improve your responses?

Priorities for improvement

One of the most important aspects of employability is learning. This is essential if we are to sustain our employability and find meaningful work.

Look back at your list of things you want to improve and note down the top three priorities for you.

<i>Priorities for improvement</i>	
Priority 1	
Priority 2	
Priority 3	

Enhancing discipline skills, practices and knowledge

We tend to think about learning as a formal activity, but there are lots of ways to learn something other than attending classes and reading what experts have to say.

Think about the different ways in which you can improve your employability. Use the table on page 2 for ideas.

Strategies for improvement

Decide on a couple of strategies for improving each of your three key priority areas. For each strategy, don't forget to note down the timeframe (i.e. when you are going to do this).

Priority	Improvement Strategy	Timeframe
Priority 1	Strategy 1 Strategy 2	
Priority 2	Strategy 1 Strategy 2	
Priority 3	Strategy 1 Strategy 2	

Digital literacy

When considering technology, think in terms of digital skills and capabilities. Have a look at the resource '[What is digital literacy?](#)' for areas to consider.

Make it count!

To have the best possible opportunities when you finish your studies, you need to keep working on your development. Sometimes, this requires quite a lot of time. The best time to start doing this is now, so don't delay!

Looking back at your employability strengths, check that you have included the strengths and experience you have gained through unpaid and paid work, volunteering, community activities, sports and music. Add these strengths to your CV. For more ideas, visit your careers centre or careers advisor.

Adapted from [Australian Blueprint for Career Development](#) Phase 2 (B) Learning and Work Exploration 4.2 Link lifelong learning to personal career aspiration. The digital literacy components were developed by Jo Coldwell (Deakin University).