

# What is employability?

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The word employability is a compound word made from the words employ and ability.

Look at how the two words might be defined in a dictionary:

**employ** [ɪmˈplɔɪ, ɛmˈplɔɪ] verb

1. To pay someone in exchange for work.

“The firm announced it would employ more university graduates.”

Synonyms: commission, engage, enlist, hire

2. To make use of.

“The man employed the strategy to ensure his success.”

Synonyms: apply, engage, operate, use, utilise

**ability** [əˈbi-lə-tē] noun

1. The means or skill to accomplish a task.

“Sarah used her ability to create a brand new design that resolved her problem.”

Synonyms: capability, capacity, competence, facility, faculty

2. A natural or acquired proficiency in a certain field of endeavour.

“Graduate work tends to go to the people who can articulate and demonstrate their abilities.”

Synonyms: aptitude, capability, expertise, genius, proficiency, prowess, skill, talent

The most important component of employability is not to be employed at graduation, but to develop the ability to find, create and sustain work over time.

Rather than considering how you might be employed - used - once you graduate, focus on how you can employ your abilities to achieve something that has meaning for you. To help define this, give yourself no more than 10 seconds to answer each of the following questions. What do your answers tell you about what is important or meaningful for you?

1. What are your favourite experiences of being employed?
2. What were the frustrating aspects of being employed in these roles?
3. How would you use your abilities to change these roles?
4. What abilities make you more employable than someone else?
5. Which abilities might you need to improve?
6. How in your life do you want to employ your abilities to make a difference?

## Make it count!

Complete: "Get to know your dream work" to get a better understanding of how you might use your abilities to make a meaningful contribution in your chosen field. Next, find an industry, context or business in which you could make this happen.

Identify two or three people who have the authority to help you achieve this, and either connect with them via LinkedIn or add them to your professional network.

This report was contributed by Dawn Bennett (Curtin University).