

## What's the difference between hard skills and soft skills?

The key differences between hard skills and soft skills are how they are gained and put to use in the workplace. Hard skills are often gained through education or specific training. They include competencies like how to use a certain machine, software or another tool. Soft skills are more often seen as personality traits you may have spent your whole life developing. They are called upon when you manage your time, communicate with other people or confront a difficult situation for the first time. Put another way, hard skills could be defined as your technical knowledge whereas soft skills are your overall habits in the workplace.

### What are hard skills?

Hard skills are technical knowledge or training that you have gained through any life experience, including in your career or education. For example:

If you've worked in food service or retail, you may know how to use a point-of-sale system.

If you've taken an accounting class, you may know how to use Microsoft Excel.

If you've studied a foreign language, you may be able to speak it fluently.

Every job will require certain technical skills specific to that industry. If you want to work as an architect, for example, you will need to know how to use drafting software. The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards also requires architects to be licensed. The NCARB maintains the Architectural Registration Examination, a series of tests required of architects that test different technical skills necessary for the work.

Many other industries have such tests in place, requiring prior knowledge and skills essential for career success. Other employers may have the availability to teach certain technical skills on the job.

You can learn more about the requirements of different jobs and the skills employers are looking for on Career Paths.

### Hard skills list

Some of the most in-demand hard skills include:

Bilingual or multilingual/ Database management /Adobe software suite/ Network security/

SEO/SEM marketing /Statistical analysis/ Data mining/ Mobile development /User interface design/

Marketing campaign management /Storage systems and management/

Programming languages (such as Perl, Python, Java, and Ruby).

## What are soft skills?

Soft skills are personal habits and traits that shape how you work, on your own and with others. Effective communication, for example, is a key soft skill many employers seek. Some others include dependability, effective teamwork and active listening.

Soft skills are essential to your career and as you search for jobs. While hard skills necessary to successfully perform technical tasks in a job, soft skills are necessary to create a positive and functional work environment. For this reason, employers often seek individuals who possess proven soft and hard skills. Some employers may prefer to select candidates who have a stronger set of soft skills over hard skills, as soft skills are at times more difficult to develop.

For example, you may be seeking a job in Human Resources but lack prior knowledge of data analysis tools. If you have references that can attest to the effectiveness of your soft skills, such as empathy, open-mindedness and communication, an employer may choose you over another candidate whose hard skills are stronger but who lacks the same level of soft skills.

### Soft skills list

Some of the most in-demand soft skills include:

Integrity

Dependability

Effective communication

Open-mindedness

Teamwork

Creativity

Problem-solving

Critical thinking

Adaptability

Organization

Willingness to learn

Empathy your overall habits in the workplace.