

Understand Your Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

Understanding your knowledge, skills and abilities is important when creating both your professional development and personal branding plans. Most positions have minimum requirements for the knowledge, skills and abilities that applicants must meet in order to make it through an initial screening process prior to being selected for interviews. Your knowledge, skills and abilities are critical to your employability and longevity in the workforce. Common definitions of these include:

- Your **knowledge** is what you have learned over time through education or experience;
- your **skills** are what you can do and can often be measured by tests; and
- your **abilities** are the special talents or personal qualities that enable you to perform observable tasks or activities.

By maintaining an awareness of your knowledge, skills and abilities, you can proactively manage your development and have a greater influence over your performance and success in the work force. A brief review of your knowledge, skills and abilities can help you better understand your strengths and weaknesses. You can use this information when you develop your story, social media profiles and talking points. Your goal involves positioning yourself to be an obvious choice for opportunities. Equally important is leveraging this information when talking with others who can be bridges to employers or other opportunities. You should be able to communicate confidently about your strengths and weaknesses, demonstrate how they have contributed to your prior successes, and how you are currently developing as a professional. Organizations often use these terms as if they are interchangeable. But they are unique, and having a thorough understanding of the terms and of your knowledge, skills and abilities will be beneficial to your professional success. Work through the following exercises to better understand your knowledge, skills and abilities.

Do you have experience in a particular field? If so, for what length of time?

Describe the scope of your responsibilities. Did you work independently or on teams? Did you oversee the performance of others?

Describe your experience as it relates to your role and the knowledge you have acquired.

Describe your formal education. List any degrees, majors, specialties or training from which you've acquired knowledge.

List the interpersonal, mental and physical skills you have acquired that you would prefer to continue to use (e.g., communicating to individuals and large groups in person and online, managing information, leading teams through challenging circumstances, etc.).

Describe your abilities (e.g., use creativity to create new products and services, conceptualize inventions, self-motivate to achieve goals, etc.).
