

**Exercise - Tool #4 – Part 1: Assessing Your Skills – Brainstorming your experiences**

⇒ The first step is to list your experiences that may have some relevance in a job. Start broadly. You might think of all the science courses you have taken, laboratory courses that you have taken, any work experience (whether paid or volunteer), leadership experiences, events sponsored by organizations in which you have been actively involved...and many others.

**My Experiences**

<p><b>My classes / training / workshops/ tutorials</b></p>	<p><b>My leadership experiences/group activities/ professional associations</b></p>
<p><b>My jobs: research experiences, internships, volunteer work</b></p>	<p><b>My hobbies and other activities</b></p>



## Exercise - Tool #4 – Part 2: Assessing Your Skills – Identifying skill sets from your experiences

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- ⇒ Next, think about those experiences as you review the list of skills (from the commonly used skills page). Think about which skills you may have acquired as part of a particular experience. For example, many lab courses require group work, so this falls under the “working with others” skill. Most of your experiences will have provided you the opportunity to acquire multiple skills.
- ⇒ Identify skill categories which appear prevalently among your collection of experiences. For example, if much of your coursework, lab work, and your summer research involved computation, “proficiency with computer hardware and software” might be a good place to start.
- ⇒ Write the skill set category that you have identified at the top one of the pages labeled “Identifying My Skills – An Assessment Worksheet”
- ⇒ You are now ready to begin using the worksheet to flesh out the specific details about the particular skills in that category. Follow the “Skills Assessment Activity Guidelines” (below). These guidelines will take you through a simple process to refine your experiences and identified skills into polished statements ready for your resume, cover letter, or interview question answer.
- ⇒ Note: You may need to repeat this process several times, until you have a well-honed bullet point list of 8–12 unique skills. Again, you may have several specific skills that fall into a single skill set category . For example, you may have several unique skills related to “use of laboratory instruments”.
- ⇒ Make extra copies of the pages entitled “Identifying My Skills – An Assessment Worksheet”, since you will want to reiterate this process as you grow professionally, have new experiences, and attain new skills.
- ⇒ After completing several skills identification worksheets, summarize your bullet points and stories on the page labeled “My Skills Summary.” These summaries will be invaluable when you sit down to write your resume, write cover letters, and prepare for interviews.



## Skills Assessment Activity Guidelines

1

**Carefully examine your experiences.** Identify one of the commonly used skills that appears in your experiences. Write this skill at the top of the "Identifying My Skills" page:

- ⇒ working with laboratory equipment
- ⇒ conducting research
- ⇒ communicating complex ideas
- ⇒ proficiency with computer hardware and software
- ⇒ analysis and quantitative thinking
- ⇒ working with others
- ⇒ problem solving
- ⇒ critical thinking

2

**Back to the brainstormed list of experiences.**

- ⇒ Now, regroup.
- ⇒ Use your list to write down all your experiences related to the skill. Include all the experiences that contribute to the development of this skill.
- ⇒ Consider classes, REU or internship experiences, summer jobs, teaching or research assistant experiences, club activities, outreach experiences, related hobbies.

3

**Narrow it down.** Draft a bullet point related to this skill like one you might use on a resume

- ⇒ Keep this short and to the point

4

**Refine the language.**

Refine your bullet point, focusing on *what you know how to do* and *how well you know how to do it*. You may want to do a few drafts and get feedback from others on which is most clear, concise, and meaningful.

**Wording suggestions:** Made measurements, took data, built, assembled, interfaced, performed troubleshooting, maintained, repaired, designed, calibrated, trained others, taught, investigated, wrote, organized, led, provided support for, managed, coordinated, analyzed, presented, modeled, processed, constructed, oversaw, simulated, modified, collaborated with, solved, experimented with...

5

**Tell it.**

Write down a few specific anecdotes that demonstrate your experiences related to this skill.

**Tips on explaining how well you know how to do something:** Words like expert and proficient are vague and do not tell employers very much. Instead, describe your experience quantitatively or give evidence of your expertise. Possible quantitative descriptors: several times over the course of a semester, daily during the internship, x hours, x times... Possible evidence of expertise: trained colleagues, taught introductory students, published a paper...

**Go back to your experiences:** Write down **specific** examples that demonstrate **how** you made use of this skill or how you attained it. **Think** about how these examples might help you answer some of the common behavioral interview questions.



## Identifying My Skills – An Assessment Worksheet

Skill category: \_\_\_\_\_

Back to my brainstorming: Reorganizing my experiences related to this skill category

Tell it: Draft a bullet point related to this skill

Refine the language: Refine your bullet point, focusing on *what you know how to do* and *how well you know how to do it*. You may want to do a few drafts and get feedback from others on which is most clear, concise, and meaningful.

Show it: Write down a few anecdotes that demonstrate your experiences related to this skill





⇒ List your “Show it” stories below


