

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER

These exercises help you understand your career assets or career capital. Career assets are the skills, knowledge and achievements that you can offer to other people or build on yourself for a career change. Completing these exercises can be useful in preparation for putting together your CV or completing an application form, and also for understanding what you can sell to prospective employers in interview.

Identifying your transferable skills

It helps to take a close look at the skills you possess and to pinpoint your transferable skills. These are skills that you have been using in one environment but that can be valuable if you want or need to change sector or are making a large career overhaul.

1. Using a coloured pen, highlight which you think are your top 5-10 skills. These are skills which you are very good at and people seem to value you for. You may not use them particularly frequently or even enjoy doing them, but you stand out from other people for being good at them. The skills list is not exhaustive but is designed to be a prompt. Feel free to add any other skills you have that are not on the list.

Adapting	Administering	Advising
Analysing	Anticipating	Appraising
Articulating	Assembling	Assessing
Auditing	Briefing	Budgeting
Building	Calculating	Certifying
Chairing	Classifying	Coaching
Collaborating	Collating	Communicating face to face
Communicating by telephone	Communicating in writing	Computing
Conceptualising	Constructing	Consulting
Controlling	Coordinating	Coping
Counselling	Creating	Cultivating
Customer service	Decision-making	Delegating
Demonstrating	Designing	Detailing
Detecting	Developing	Diagnosing
Diplomacy	Directing	Displaying
Disproving	Dissecting	Disseminating
Documenting	Drafting	Drawing
Driving	Editing	Educating
Empathising	Empowering	Enforcing
Estimating	Evaluating	Examining
Experimenting	Explaining	Facilitating
Filing	Finalising	Financing
Fixing	Forecasting	Generating ideas
Growing plants	Guiding	Handling conflict
Helping	Illustrating	Implementing
Improving	Improvising	Influencing

Informing	Initiating	Innovating
Inspecting	Inspiring	Installing
Interpreting	Interviewing	Inventing
Investigating	Judging	Launching
Leading	Learning quickly	Lecturing
Liaising	Making presentations	Managing
Managing people	Marketing	Measuring
Mediating	Memorising	Mentoring
Modelling	Moderating	Motivating
Negotiating	Networking	Operating
Ordering	Organising	Painting
Persuading	Piloting	Pioneering
Planning	Precision	Presenting
Prioritising	Problem-solving	Procuring
Promoting	Proof reading	Public speaking
Publicising	Purchasing	Quantifying
Raising animals	Reconciling	Recording
Recruiting	Rehabilitating	Relationship building
Repairing	Report writing	Representing
Researching	Restoring	Risk assessing
Scheduling	Selling	Setting objectives
Simplifying	Sorting	Structuring
Summarising	Supervising	Systematising
Teaching	Team building	Testing
Time management	Training	Trouble shooting
Using tools	Versatility	Visualising
Winning	Working to deadlines	Working under pressure
Writing		

2. For the skills you have highlighted as your key skills, think of examples when you have demonstrated them in action.

Your key skills	Examples of when you have used these skills
<i>Eg, Communicating in writing</i>	<i>Wrote all the communications to customers informing them of the takeover</i> <i>Wrote copy for the website</i> <i>Produced reports for management</i>

3. Now, go back to the long list and use a different colour pen to highlight which of these skills you particularly want to use in the future or want to develop further. Perhaps these will help you to do your job better, improve your promotion prospects or are skills that are simply of interest to you.

Skills I want to develop further

Your skills are part of your career assets and you can use this information to demonstrate in your CV what you can offer, or persuade an employer in interview of your suitability. This exercise can also help you assess your options and identify any possible career changes. The skills you have noted will help you decide whether you are capable of what you want to achieve in the future, or if there are any gaps you need to close.

Identifying your achievements

No matter what roles you have worked in, there will be times when you have been responsible for achieving something noteworthy or have added value to an organisation. It is very common for people to be very modest about their contributions. Recognising the value you have is another important part of understanding what you have to offer.

1. Use the box below to list or brainstorm all the achievements or moments of success you can think of which you found particularly satisfying or that other people seemed to rate highly. They can be work-related or personal. Your achievements could include things such as:
 - Awards, commendations, special mentions
 - Solving a tricky problem that had previously been unresolved
 - Taking a calculated risk which paid off
 - Being given responsibility for a difficult task not part of your normal job
 - Making improvements or significant changes
 - Your proudest moment at work

You might find it helpful to look at past appraisals or any other documents / emails / customer communication that provide positive feedback on your achievements.

My achievements

From your list of achievements, select a minimum of three and start to explore each of these in more detail noting down your answers to the following questions:

- Why are you particularly proud of this achievement?
- What was difficult about it?
- What did you do that made a difference?
- Why did it matter to you, the organisation or to others?
- What did you learn about yourself through the experience?

Achievement 1

Achievement 2

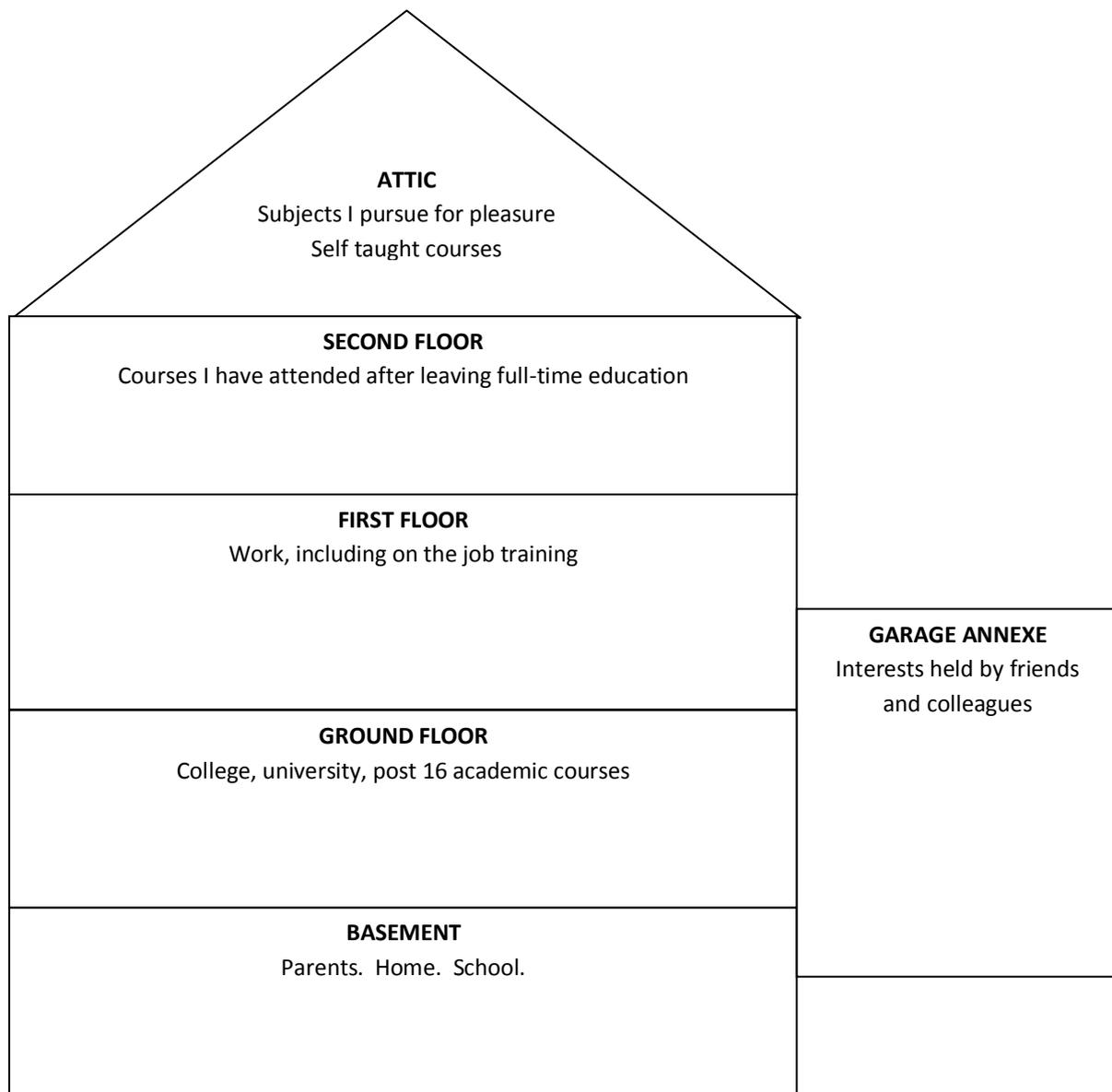
Achievement 3

Identifying what you know

This exercise helps you to identify, record, value and communicate the things you know about or trained in; your knowledge. It is also a vital step to help you identify areas of interest that may provide strong links to future career choices. What we choose to learn about is a vital part of who we are.

What do you know about? Ask that question to someone on the train or in the pub and they will talk firstly about the areas of knowledge most frequently used in their job. They will often talk about their educational specialisation. Therefore “my degree was in Spanish but I’m an accountant now”, merely scratches the surface.

Look at the house. It has a ground floor, first floor, second floor, attic, basement and a garage at the side. Each level represents something of what you know.



Adapted from John Lees, How to get a job you'll love

1. Begin with the basement, the firm foundations provided by your home, school, and family.
2. Complete the areas of the ground, first and second floors. Start with straightforward information that appears in your CV. Then try to remember the things you forgot about:
 - What subject did you enjoy most at school? (This is not the same as the ones you did best at in terms of qualifications.)
 - What were the things you choose to read about?
 - What subjects were you so enthusiastic about that you voluntarily read more?
 - Think about the training courses you attended that you got the most out of. What were they about? What did you learn?
 - What subjects led you to turning points in your life (that night school pottery class that made you change your degree course...)?
 - Which subjects have you enjoyed training others in?
3. Move on now to your leisure pursuits, areas of personal interest and things you have taught yourself. This is your attic - the parts of your brain where you store all the old junk you have forgotten you had:
 - Given a free choice, what would you choose to talk about over a relaxed meal?
 - If you could teach a workshop on any subject in the world, to any audience and given unlimited preparation time, what would that subject be?
 - If you could learn about any subject in the world from any teacher what would that be?
 - When you read a newspaper or magazine, which sections part do you turn to first? Which sections do you ignore?
 - When do you find yourself reading, talking or thinking about a subject and others have to shut you up? When do you find yourself so engrossed in an article or book that time goes by unnoticed?
 - Think of a time when you have enjoyed learning about someone else's favourite subject or hobby? What was the subject?
 - What things do you find yourself browsing on the internet?
 - If you were accidentally locked in a bookstore for the weekend, in which section would you camp out? Once you got bored where would you go next?
 - If you won the lottery and did not have to work, how would you indulge yourself? What would you do to fill your time?
4. Last, but not least. The garage. It is on the side because it is about vicarious interest, living life through the eyes and minds of other people. Think about close friends whose interests you share.
5. Look at your complete house, what have you missed out? It will be things you consider 'trivial', such as cooking, homemaking or family history. But if you enjoy it include it.

This is about remembering all the things you have chosen to learn about. This tells you a great deal in terms of motivation and subject interests and can lead you onto potential areas of work. This step is important because it is about recovering parts of your past which you undervalue, and interests that will give you energy and enthusiasm in the future.

Identifying your expertise

Sometimes we have knowledge, or expertise, that is built up through experience and doing a job for a length of time.

Try to identifying for each job you have had, or any significant hobbies you have, the expertise that you gained that was important to the organisation or others. Examples could include:

- Technical expertise such as a certain piece of machinery or computer system
- Expertise in a particularly product or service, for example mobile phones
- Expertise in a particular industry or sector such as pharmaceuticals
- Local or international knowledge or expertise such as doing business in a certain geographical area
- Cultural or specific expertise such as working with different ethnic groups or sectors of the population such as SMEs
- Knowledge of working with certain systems or procedures such as Health and Safety or ISO standards
- Awareness of any research experiments or results

My expertise

Identifying value in non-work experiences

There may be many other things in your life apart from work, qualifications and training that will count as part of your career assets. Experience gained outside of work in hobbies or voluntary work, clubs or through travelling. In fact, any experience where you were taking the opportunity to demonstrate and develop your skills and expertise, or your willingness to contribute, try something new, or add value to something may be of interest to a future employer.

Non-work experiences

Have you been involved in any clubs, voluntary work, societies, informal mentor arrangements outside of work? As before, try to extract from these experiences the skills that you used, the knowledge and expertise you gained and anything that the work was particularly valued for. Think about whether voluntary work says anything about your work ethic or values and whether you have something extra to offer as a result.

My non-work experiences

Hobbies and interests

What hobbies or non-work interests do you have? Could any of these be relevant or interesting in your future career? Can you demonstrate any skills, knowledge or expertise you have gained through them? Do they demonstrate anything about your personality that makes you stand out as being different from other people, and hence is part of what you have to offer?

My hobbies and interests