

Graduating with an English Degree

Building your Job Profile by Identifying your Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are what you pick up in one setting that you can easily transfer to your next job, meaning they aren't industry-specific. You'll use many transferable skills—like writing, communication, and problem-solving skills—in every job you ever have but as a new or soon-to-be graduate, you'll need to learn how to transfer your classroom skills (academic experiences) into the job setting. There are two types of transferable skills: **hard** and **soft**. Hard skills are specific skills that you usually use in a particular job or career field. Soft-skills are non-technical skills that enable you to interact effectively with others. It is important to promote both in your job profile. Soft skills represent the personal abilities you possess, and hard skills demonstrate practical abilities that address industry prowess or technical function. Hint: Don't include one large list of all transferable skills on your resume. For each application, highlight only the relevant skills you'll need for that position.

English-Related Hard Skills

Information Literacy & Research

English majors learn solid research skills. To stay current and innovate, companies need employees who can do in-depth research, filter information to determine the best sources, use evidence to support arguments, and explain information clearly and concisely. Research requires an ethical evaluation of materials to ensure you have factual documentation for a decision or claim.

Transferable **research** skills:

- Collecting and analyzing data from surveys, questionnaires and literary reviews
- Citing research to support decision-making and or departmental initiatives

Editing & Proofreading

The degree's focus on research and academic writing means that English majors develop attention to detail. They are adept at crafting content across genres, contexts, and audiences and looking for mistakes in grammar, tone, or citation style. Employers know poor writing reflects poorly upon the company, and mistakes cost millions of dollars annually so these are valuable skills. In addition to learning how to edit their own work, English majors often learn how to help others revise, which means you are skilled at proofreading. When you enter the workforce, you can use your mastery of the English language to successfully revise the work of clients or to enhance clear communication across departments. Examples of documents you might edit during your professional career include blog posts, emails, reports, memos, presentations and technical manuals.

In addition to stating the obvious (proofreading/editing skills), other transferable **editing** skills:

- Quality assurance
- Adept at word processing tools
- Accessible communicator

Technology Proficiency

Various English assignments require you to develop computer proficiency, like word processing software, presentation programs, and search databases. Employers will appreciate your experience with technology, as it allows you to type efficiently and quickly catch on to their existing programs. Your projects may have also helped you to learn web and social media authoring tools. Make a list of the digital tools that you use regularly, along with digital trends and topics to show that you can stay up to date. Think of common apps, such as Slack, Zoom, or programs specific to the prospective industry. Narrow that list down to the most recent tools for the role you're pursuing to showcase your ability to embrace evolving technologies.

Transferable **technology** skills:

- Troubleshooting technical issues
- Adept at communication and editing programs
- Customer relationship management software

English-Related Soft Skills

Critical Thinking

English majors learn the critical and theoretical tools necessary to read analytically and write logically. They learn to distinguish relevant information and extract deeper themes to complex texts. They can easily identify biases like logical fallacy and unstated assumptions. English majors develop critical thinking skills by reading works of literature and forming ideas about the work based on their experiences, the experiences of other people and literary theories.

Transferable **critical thinking** skills:

- Objectively analyze a situation
- Identify biases of/gaps in understanding a problem
- Process improvement

Communication

Communication is the ability to exchange information with other people. English majors often focus on written communication. Through writing, you've learned how to summarize, infer, compare, exemplify, classify, and explain. When you enter the workforce, these skills can help you compose effective emails to targeted audiences, write reports for executives, and communicate with diverse audiences in compelling ways. English majors also develop verbal communication skills through group projects, workshops, teaching, and presentations.

Transferable **communication** skills:

- Active listening
- Written, Verbal and/or interpersonal communication
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Training and development

Empathy & Emotional Intelligence

English majors learn to examine issues through an intersectional lens (an awareness of gender, race, class, ability, sexuality, etc.). English majors often develop empathy through reading the works of diverse perspectives. In literature, you might find that reading an experience from the point of view of the main character helps you understand situations from other people's perspectives in the real world. In the workplace, empathy can help you collaborate with team members, facilitate conflict resolution and respond to consumer needs.

Transferable **empathy** skills:

- Listening skills
- Mediation
- Perspective-taking

Organization & Time Management

English majors work well under pressure because they've learned to research, read, across multiple classes, often with competing deadlines. They learn how to organize their material, be selective about the inclusion of information, and structure their thoughts coherently. Employers often appreciate English majors for their time and project management skills that help them optimize productivity.

Transferable **organizational** skills:

- Attention to detail
- Prioritization of project management
- Multitasking

Learning Mindset

Workplace structure is changing, in part expedited by the pandemic, so approaching your career with a focus on continual learning is fast becoming a desirable skill. Leaders are eager for team members who are open to new technologies and approaches and can adapt to any situation.

Transferable **learning-mindset** skills:

- Enthusiasm for learning
- Proactively seeking out new technologies or trends
- Curiosity

Creativity & Problem-Solving

English majors can apply their creativity to the workplace by finding original solutions to challenges and proposing ideas that help employers succeed. Creativity is especially sought in careers like graphic design, communication specialist, social media coordinating, and content writing. Flexibility is your willingness to solve problems, change, and adapt. As an English major, you develop flexibility working in groups, meeting the requirements of competing assignments, adjusting to different writing contexts, and seeking out feedback from their professors to revise projects.

Transferable **creativity** skills:

- Innovator
- Story-teller
- Flexible with or adaptive to new trends

Independence, Dependability, & Collegiality

English majors learn to both work independently and collaborate effectively in teams. Employers value a balance of these skills. While some English courses have components where you work with classmates (i.e., group projects), others require you to work on long-term projects solo.

Transferable **collegiality** skills:

- Relationship building
- Collaborative
- Conflict resolution

Transferable **dependability** skills:

- Punctuality, meets deadlines
- Integrity and work ethic
- High-achiever

Transferable **independence** skills:

- Self-motivating and initiative-taking
- High-achiever
- Goal setter

Job Search Resources

Places to Help with the Hunt

- [AWP](#): Attend a writing conference to network or utilize their website for resources. Some of their resources are free to the public; others like job listings cost money to access.
- [Dear English Major](#): Find blogs and email newsletters like this that cater to helping your specific experiences translate beyond your graduate program.
- [HigherEd Jobs](#): If interested in working in higher ed, create a narrowed job search on sites like this that understand the nuances to higher education careers.
- [Flex Jobs](#): If you're interested in remote or hybrid work in multiple fields, create a job search on a site like this that helps you move beyond location-bound work.
- [Poets & Writers](#): If you're interested in a writing-related job, look for sites like this that cater specifically to the writing community, both in resources and in job listings.

- [LinkedIn](#): Be strategic about using a networking platform like this. Create a profile, save job searches, join communities, apply directly, and follow “dream” companies to learn about their content/staff.
- [LinkedIn Learning](#): While you’re an MTSU student, you have free access to this program. Use it to complete a virtual training or gain important soft or hard skill certifications.
- [MTSU Career Services](#): Career advisors can help you strengthen your resume, CV, or cover letter. Identify career pathways through personality tests and strength inventories. Get special access to job and internship listings.

Reframing Higher Ed Vocab for the Job

- *Students*: participants, employees, clients, constituents, advisees, trainees
- *Advising*: consulting, strategic planning
- *Orientation*: onboarding
- *Institution*: organization or company
- *Staff or faculty*: employee
- *Supervise or teach*: manage
- *Student conduct*: trust, safety, integrity, values, standards
- *Workshops or classroom presentations*: facilitated, developed talent, training
- *Creating a curriculum/syllabus*: instructional design
- *Learning outcomes*: Organizational goals and objectives
- *Academic year*: fiscal or calendar year

Resume Formatting for ATS

Recruiters and HR can get bogged down in the process of reviewing resumes for open positions, so many employers use an applicant tracking system (ATS) more than ever before. An ATS can’t read your resume the way a human would. Instead, it scans for keywords and matches them to their programmed list of prerequisites. The ATS will then rank you against other candidates. If you pass a certain threshold, your resume is likely passed along to the hiring manager. As a job seeker, it only benefits you to keep an ATS in mind when designing and writing resumes.

- **Headers**: Some ATSs cannot identify details we often put into our headers, like contact information, so it’s best to avoid important information in your header or footer.
- **Headings**: Be clear and concise.
- **Columns**: Some ATSs will read columns left to right instead of column by column. Stick to a simple layout to ensure your info isn’t accidentally scrambled.
- **Font**: Times New Roman, Helvetica, Calibri, Arial, Tahoma or Garamond, 12 point font for normal text and 24 point font or smaller for headings/titles
- **Images**: Be aware that ATS may not pick up tables, graphics, logos, images, or text boxes.
- **File Name/Type**: Use a customized file name (Last Name_First _Job Title). Save as Word or PDF (the latter for special formatting).