

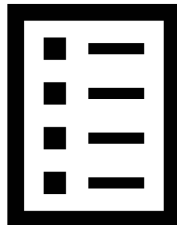
Making the Most of Your Courses: Documenting Your Skills & Behaviors

Semester/Year:

List of Courses:

Step 1: Behavior Inventory

- Review the syllabi for your courses and make a list of all the behaviors you engaged in as a part of each course.
- Be SPECIFIC. Break complex behaviors (i.e., course assignments) into their component parts.
 - For example, do not list "completed 10-page paper", but instead think of all of the behaviors that contributed to this outcome ("searched psychology databases for articles", "created a literature review table that summarized each article", "identified a gap in the literature", "sought feedback from the course TA regarding my idea", and so on)
- The goal is to end up with a lengthy list of specific behaviors. Write down anything that comes to mind, even if it wasn't assessed as part of the course, or if it doesn't seem that important.
 - *Complete this step on a blank sheet of paper or blank word document.*



Step 2: Organize into Categories

- Review the APA resource "*The Skillful Psychology Student*" on the next page.
- Take each behavior on your list, and place it into one of these five skills categories on page 3.
 - *Hint: If a behavior seems like it fits under multiple categories, it probably needs to be broken down into smaller components.*
- Feel free to edit, revise, and add new behaviors as they come to mind. As you start categorizing, you might realize that you forgot to include behaviors in your original list.
- You may find it useful to include the course code (in parentheses) at the end of each behavior. This way you will be able to keep track of which courses you developed which skills in.

THE SKILLFUL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT

PREPARED FOR SUCCESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE

Psychology provides skills that employers value.



COGNITIVE

Analytical thinking: Solve complex problems, attend to details, plan proactively, and display comfort with ambiguity.

Critical thinking: Display proficiency with statistics, program evaluation, and research design necessary for the study of social and technical systems.

Creativity: Use innovative and resourceful approaches to problem solving and new tasks.

Information management: Be adept at locating, organizing, evaluating, and distributing information from multiple sources.

Judgment and decision making: Engage in logical and systematic thinking and ethical decision making when considering the possible outcomes of a particular action.



COMMUNICATION

Oral communication: Demonstrate strong active listening and conversational abilities in both informal and professional environments, as well as aptitude for public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences.

Written communication: Comprehend relevant reading materials to produce professional documents that are grammatically correct, such as technical or training materials and business correspondence.



PERSONAL

Adaptability: Adjust successfully to change by responding in a flexible, proactive, and civil manner when changes occur.

Integrity: Perform work in an honest, reliable, and accountable manner that reflects the ethical values and standards of an organization.

Self-regulation: Manage time and stress by completing assigned tasks with little or no supervision; display initiative and persistence by accepting and completing additional duties in a careful, thorough, and dependable manner.



SOCIAL

Collaboration: Work effectively in a team by cooperating, sharing responsibilities, and listening and responding appropriately to the ideas of others.

Inclusivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural and individual differences and similarities by working effectively with diverse people, respecting and considering divergent opinions, and showing respect for others.

Leadership: Establish a vision for individuals and for the group, creating long-term plans and guiding and inspiring others to accomplish tasks in a successful manner.

Management: Manage individuals and/or teams, coordinate projects, and prioritize individual and team tasks.

Service orientation: Seek ways to help people by displaying empathy; maintaining a customer, patient, or client focus; and engaging in the community.



TECHNOLOGICAL

Flexibility/adaptability to new systems: Be willing and able to learn and/or adapt to new computer platforms, operating systems, and software programs.

Familiarity with hardware and software: Demonstrate competency in using various operating systems, programs, and/or coding protocols; troubleshoot technical errors; and use software applications to build and maintain websites, create web-based applications, and perform statistical analyses.

Cognitive Behaviors



Communication Behaviors



Personal Behaviors



Social Behaviors



Technological Behaviors



Step 3: Review the Evidence & Identify Skills

- Review the evidence (the behaviors) you have listed for each category. Check the box beside each skill that you have evidence for.
 - *Hint: The skills listed here are complex and multifaceted. Check the box even if you only have partial evidence for the skill.*

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Final Step: Put into words!

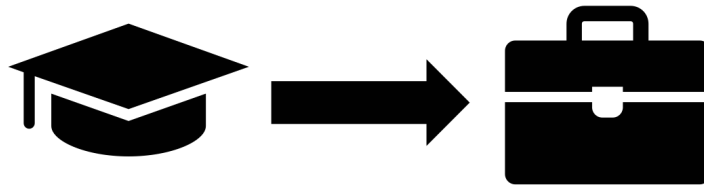
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- Create powerful statements that can be used in cover letters, graduate school applications, job applications, or when requesting reference letters from your professors.
 - Match the skills you've identified in Step 3 with the behaviors you've listed on Page 3 and create sentences that take the following general form:
 - **"I am able to** <full or partial skill description>, **as evidenced by** <list of behaviors>."
 - *Hint: for job/volunteer/scholarship/program applications, modify the wording of skill descriptions to match those provided by the employer/program*
 - Some examples:
 - "I am able to *solve complex problems, attend to details, plan proactively, and display comfort with ambiguity*, as evidenced by my successful completion of a semester-long research project in PSY321. This project required developing a novel, evidence-based solution to a real world problem. I chose to tackle the problem of youth voter turnout. I surveyed the literature, identified a key barrier to youth voter turnout, and proposed a novel solution to this problem based on the psychological principle of political efficacy. I carefully considered the limitations of this proposed solution in terms of both its feasibility and impact, and specified the conditions for which I expect it would be most effective."
 - "I am *willing and able to learn how to use new software programs*, as evidenced by ability to use SPSS software to complete statistics assignments in PSY321. Despite being more comfortable and familiar with Excel, I learned how to compute many descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS within a short period of time."

Choose a few skills you believe you have the strongest evidence for, and practice writing your statements here:

Lastly, use this space to **record any additional thoughts** that come to mind as you **reflect on what you have learned this year** (e.g., what was your biggest accomplishment?). Also take this time to **reflect on any gaps or weak spots** in your transferable skill set; what might be some ways to address these?

Final tips for using this resource effectively

- Be sure to **save this PDF** (add the semester/year to the filename). By the end of your degree, you will have an amazing record of all of the skills that you've developed AND the evidence that you have for them. This is HUGE!
- At the end of every year, take time to **review and reflect** on all you have learned. Also use this time to **identify any gaps** in your skill set that you would like to fill. **Meet with an academic advisor** and choose courses (or find other opportunities) for the following year that will help you fill in these gaps.
- Book an appointment with your **campus career center** and bring these records with you. A career advisor will be able to help you identify opportunities and translate these skills and behaviors into powerful statements for job applications, cover letters, interviews, and so on.
- When asking a professor for a letter of recommendation, you can go back and search your records for the skills/behaviors that are relevant to the course(s) you took with them. You can then compile and send this information to the professor (along with the other information they request). By already doing the work of matching your **specific course achievements** with the **skills** they demonstrate, your professor will have an easier time writing you a strong letter.



References & Additional Resources

- APA Career Guides: <https://www.apa.org/careers/resources/guides/>
- Personal statements for graduate school: <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2016/09/graduate-school-applications>
- Writing cover letters: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/college-student-cover-letter>
- Appleby, D., Young, J., Van Kirk, J., Rudman, J., Naufel, K. Z., Spencer, S. M., ... Richmond, A. S. (2019). The skillful psychology student: Skills you will need to succeed in the 21st-century workplace. *Psychology Student Network*, 7(1). Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/index>
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