

What Did I Just Learn?

The concrete skills of a psychology major

A liberal arts education and psychology major can open up a world of possibilities to you! You know you've learned many valuable skills as a student, skills that will help you succeed in your chosen career path. The problem is, you have no idea how to explain what you've learned, especially when you're nervously facing a prospective employer. What makes you a unique candidate for the job? Keep reading...you'll be astounded at all the special skills you've acquired during your years as an undergraduate student in psychology.

1. **Literacy** – Psychology students are not only literate, they are trained to write in both exploratory and prescribed ways. Strong written communication skills are a highly sought commodity in many workplaces.
2. **Numeracy** – Remember all that data you analyzed in your stats course? Now you can use the knowledge you gained there to interpret all kinds of numerical information. This along with your literacy is a unique combination!
3. **Computer Skills** – Contrary to what many people believe, not all college students gain computer skills. Highlight the special knowledge you have of statistical software or databases.
4. **Information-Gathering Skills** – In a world where available information is changing rapidly and growing exponentially, your investigative skills will serve you well. You don't have to know everything, just where to start looking in order to find it!
5. **Research Skills** – The ability to methodically and systematically gather data from the world around you that you employed in psychology can be transferred to numerous other fields. Think about the research methods and techniques you've learned (surveying, sampling, observing). How might you use these in the job you're looking for?
6. **Measurement Skills** – How do you construct a questionnaire? Or define (operationalize) a specific area for study or evaluation? This is an uncommon skill that you can offer a future employer.
7. **Environmental Awareness** – As a psych major, you were taught to observe. How do people behave in groups? Through what mechanisms does learning occur? Understanding these underlying principles of our world provides a base for you to build on regardless of your chosen career.
8. **Interpersonal Awareness** – Every job has co-workers, and employers have high interest in hiring people who can effectively interact with others. Advanced knowledge of interpersonal communication can help you negotiate office relationships and conflicts.
9. **Problem-Solving Skills** – Flexibility in thinking about problems and prospective solutions is a valuable skill, and one that psychology students must use throughout their course work. You can now tackle workplace problems with equal competence.
10. **Critical Evaluation** – Core skills in psychology are critical and analytical thinking. Determining the value of a plan or identifying strengths and weaknesses of a proposed strategy involve critical evaluation; your skepticism and questioning can be invaluable in developing sound, effective strategies and programs.
11. **Perspectives** – Psychology students are trained to examine issues from all perspectives. The ability to see an issue or argument from many angles is a valuable one.
12. **Higher-Order Analysis** – This is the ability to look at patterns across situations, or to organize information without obvious connections. The ability to construct the “big picture” can take you a long way in the world of work, and it's a skill you have been developing as a psychology major.
13. **Pragmatism** – Sometimes the perfect solution is impossible. You've seen this as you designed psychology experiments and had to make difficult choices based on practicality. Likewise, no work-related problem can be solved ideally, but you can help your employer make wise and practical choices leading to the best possible solution (like selecting you as the new employee!).

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