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# SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Top 15 content skills

Top 7 cross-functional skills

Top 15 knowledge domains

Soft skills

Hard skills

How to succeed at work



Arkansas Division of  
Workforce Services

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# Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills

## Hard Skills

Hard skills are specific, quantifiable skills such as writing, mathematics, reading, the ability to use a computer, etc. These skills are able to be defined and measured, unlike soft skills. Hard skills can be improved upon through specific training and studying and are often specific to the particular occupation in which a person seeks. These skills will help a person get the job done efficiently and effectively, thus being valuable to succeed in the workforce, specifically in the job field in which one chooses. There are many ways to improve on hard skills, whether it is studying through text, watching tutorial videos or taking classes.



## Soft Skills



Unlike hard skills, soft skills are difficult to quantify and are less tangible skills, but that does not take away their effectiveness in the workplace. Soft skills include skills such as listening, problem solving, teamwork, workplace etiquette, personal skills, work ethic, and much more. Soft skills are less concrete, making them a bit more difficult to improve upon, but that is not to say there is no hope. Soft skills may take longer to develop than hard skills, and often take a lot of work to personally master, but if one is dedicated, he or she can focus on being more confident and communicative in the workplace, making them a more viable candidate for nearly any job.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services produces short-term and long-term occupational projections for the state of Arkansas. These projections are combined with skills and knowledge data from the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) to estimate worker skills and knowledge that are more in-demand. When a skill is determined by the US Department of Labor to be moderately important and moderately required for an occupation, that occupation's projections are factored into the skills projections. Skills can be divided into basic skills and cross-functional skills. Basic skills, such as reading comprehension or critical thinking, facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills across a variety of domains. Cross-functional skills, such as problem solving, social, or technical skills are developed capacities that facilitate performance of activities that occur across jobs. Knowledge such as mathematics and science or law and public safety, represents the acquisition of facts and principles about a domain of information.

The skills listed in this publication are based on data from the 2024-2026 Short-Term Industry and Occupational Employment Projections for the state of Arkansas.

# Life Goals

Setting short- and long-term goals for yourself in the workplace and in life is essential in motivation and seeing your progress as you navigate through your career and through life. Ask yourself questions about where you want to be at certain stages in your life and in your career. The spaces below allow you to write out your aspirations to make them more tangible and more concrete, and it will allow you to make your goals more “real.” Take a few minutes to jot down your career and life goals in the spaces provided below.

Where do you hope to see your career in the next six months? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where do you hope to see your life in the next six months? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where do you hope to see your career in five years? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where do you hope to see your life in five years? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where do you hope to see your career in ten years? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where do you hope to see your life in ten years? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are your overall career goals? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are your overall life goals? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Succeed at Work Today

It's very important to take a long-term approach to your career and professional success. At the same time, it is crucial to remember that your most important job is the one you have right now. You set yourself up for success later by succeeding at work today. These tips are about how to do just that.

## Act Self-Employed

Wouldn't it be great if you were your own boss? Well, in a way, you are. Even if you work at a huge company owned by somebody else, you are ultimately responsible for your own boss - the CEO of ME INC. But all bosses have customers. And your number one customer is your supervisor. To succeed in the world of work, YOU MUST DECIDE to keep your customers happy. The buck stops with you.

### Concrete Steps

- Define your "ME INC." What kinds of products or services do you provide? What kind of reputation do you want to have with customers?
- Decide and write down your long-term goals. What do you want to be doing five and ten years from now? How do you get there? (Hint: Great customer service is a must.)

## Be a Team Player

Even though you are thinking of yourself as self-employed, you're not a solo artist. You're working on a team with many other people who are the CEOs of their own "ME INC." Learn their names. Learn the team culture. Make friends. Build trust. Show empathy. Speak and communicate honestly and plainly. Find ways to make your teammates look good. Being a team player will strengthen your "ME INC." brand.

### Concrete Steps

- Get to know your teammates. Ask them questions. Rely on their expertise. It makes them feel important (and they should because they are). BUT...
- DON'T dump your work on your teammates. They're there to help you do your job better, not to do it for you.
- Next time a boss tells you "good job" on a project, say thanks, but also pay it forward by telling your boss what a great job your teammates did.

## Develop Personal "Soft" Skills

Broadly speaking, "soft skills" are skills you need, whatever your job. Most of the skills are common sense. Listen closely to what your boss and your teammates say, and ask questions. Communicate clearly. Encourage people. Appreciate the diversity of your team. Manage conflict. Serve your customers. Be professional. Show up on time. Organize your work and plan well. Bring solutions to your boss, not just problems. Be friendly.

### Concrete Steps

- Introduce yourself to someone you don't know with a smile and a firm handshake.
- Set your morning alarm early enough so you have plenty of time to get ready for work without having to rush.
- Pick a problem at work to solve or a process to improve, come up with a solution or improvement, get your boss' approval if you need it, and then EXECUTE.

## Never Stop Learning

No more teachers, no more books, right? WRONG! The key to succeeding at work is to learn from day one at your job and continue learning for as long as you're there. Almost every job requires you to learn new equipment, new policies, and much more. Improve your skills and uncover new ones: How to serve your customers better; How to manage your time better; How to be more productive; How to communicate better. Seize those opportunities.

### Concrete Steps

- Pick a skill that you want to strengthen (like public speaking or carpentry or writing), do some research, and plan to get trained in that skill.
- Learn the big picture: What the top leaders at your company really want to accomplish, and how your job fits into that vision. Then, do it.

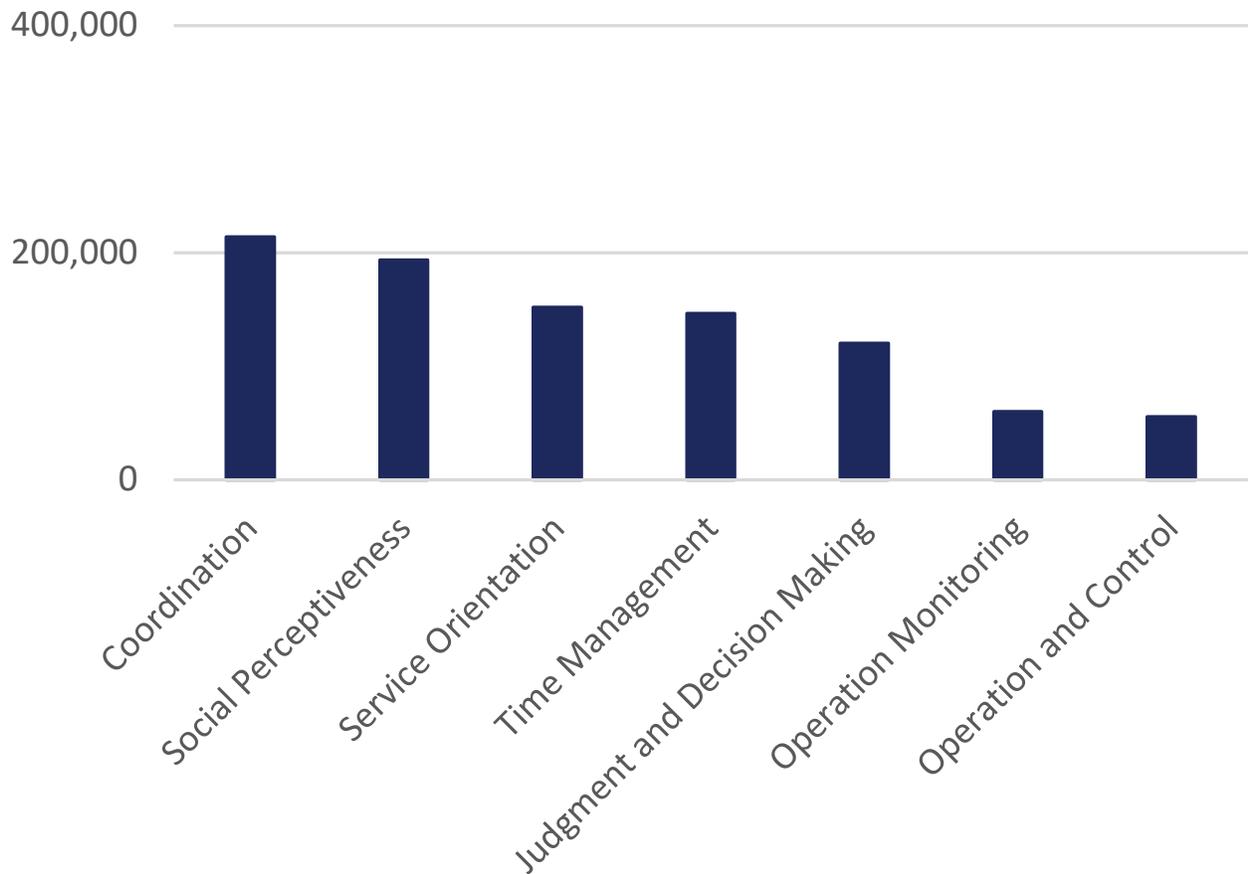
# Top 10 Basic Skills

(Developed capabilities that facilitate learning or more rapid acquisition of knowledge)

Skills	Job Demand	Definition
Critical Thinking	294,093	Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
Active Listening	281,292	Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
Speaking	270,697	Talking to others to convey information effectively.
Monitoring	241,481	Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
Reading Comprehension	239,079	Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
Writing	114,814	Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
Active Learning	74,761	Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.
Mathematics	26,184	Using mathematics to solve problems.
Learning Strategies	21,978	Selecting and using training/instructional methods and procedures appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.
Science	2,400	Using scientific rules and methods to solve problems.

# Top 7 Cross-Functional Skills

(Developed capacities that facilitate performance of activities that occur across jobs)



Skills	Job Demand	Definition
Coordination	214,034	Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
Social Perceptiveness	193,533	Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
Service Orientation	151,847	Actively looking for ways to help people.
Time Management	146,665	Managing one's own time and the time of others.
Judgment and Decision Making	120,333	Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
Operation Monitoring	60,233	Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to make sure a machine is working properly.
Operation and Control	55,522	Controlling operations of equipment or systems.

# Top 15 Knowledge Domains

(Learned sets of facts and standards required by many work situations)

Skills	Job Demand	Definition
English Language	277,463	Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
Customer and Personal Service	275,361	Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
Mathematics	211,333	Knowledge of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.
Education and Training	200,044	Knowledge of principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
Administration and Management	169,387	Knowledge of business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources.
Computers and Electronics	156,570	Knowledge of circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming.
Clerical	127,505	Knowledge of administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.
Public Safety and Security	110,743	Knowledge of relevant equipment, policies, procedures, and strategies to promote effective local, state, or national security operations for the protection of people, data, property, and institutions.
Mechanical	98,991	Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance.
Production and Processing	86,682	Knowledge of raw materials, production processes, quality control, costs, and other techniques for maximizing the effective manufacture and distribution of goods.
Sales and Marketing	75,385	Knowledge of principles and methods for showing, promoting, and selling products or services. This includes marketing strategy and tactics, product demonstration, sales techniques, and sales control systems.
Psychology	73,028	Knowledge of human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
Personnel and Human Resources	41,627	Knowledge of principles and procedures for personnel recruitment, selection, training, compensation and benefits, labor relations and negotiation, and personnel information systems.
Transportation	37,507	Knowledge of principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.
Engineering and Technology	35,059	Knowledge of the practical application of engineering science and technology. This includes applying principles, techniques, procedures, and equipment to the design and production of various goods and services.