

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

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Institute of Engineering and Technology

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What Are Interpersonal Skills?

Interpersonal skills are the behaviors and tactics a person uses to interact with others effectively. In the business world, the term refers to an employee's ability to work well with others. **Interpersonal skills** range from communication and listening to attitude and department.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Interpersonal skills help us interact with others effectively, on the job and in the larger world.
- Some people are born with such skills but everyone can improve them with practice.
- Expressing appreciation, resolving disputes, and listening well are all interpersonal skills worth practicing.



Interpersonal skills are often referred to as social intelligence. They depend on reading the signals others send and interpreting them accurately in order to form a response.

Everyone has a personal style and an interpersonal style, but some are more successful than others. While interpersonal skills may be based in part on personality and instinct, they also can be developed.



Understanding Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills can be developed but they cannot be learned solely from a textbook. They come naturally to some people, while others have to work at cultivating them.

In many organizations, employees with strong interpersonal skills are valued for their pleasant demeanor and positive, solution-oriented attitude. These employees are seen as team players, who work well with others to achieve a goal. In more human terms, everyone likes being around them, and that never hurts.

Interpersonal skills are strongly linked to a knowledge of social expectations and customs, whether learned or acquired. People with the strongest interpersonal skills adjust their tactics and communications on the fly depending on the reactions of others.



Interpersonal Skills in the Job Search

Interpersonal skills are highly valued in the business world. Job seekers should use every opportunity to show their interpersonal skills at interviews and on resumes.

Among the interpersonal skills often required in business are active listening—the ability to elicit and fully process information from a speaker. Negotiation is a skill that is prized in sales, marketing, law, and customer service. Other desirable interpersonal skills include public speaking, conflict management, team building, and collaboration.



Improving Interpersonal Skills

- Interpersonal skills are best honed by practice.
- Expressing appreciation for team members and support staff, displaying empathy, moderating disputes quickly, and controlling displays of temper are all good exercises.
- Active listening can be practiced by repeating back a speaker's comment to make sure true communication is taking place.
- If all that isn't enough, there are courses that teach these skills.



Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace

Strong interpersonal skills such as negotiating, problem-solving, and knowledge-sharing are the main requirements for many jobs. Other skills are seen as essential qualifications for all employees, including:

- Teamwork
- Verbal and written communication
- Dependability
- Responsibility
- Empathy

It's difficult to imagine a company thriving if its employees do not have these interpersonal skills.



Tips for Improving Your Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills form an integral part of your professional toolbox. From collaborating on a project with a colleague to liaising with an important external stakeholder, you need the confidence, empathy and communication skills to make the most of every interaction.

Strong interpersonal skills will help you gain allies and simultaneously demonstrate to your supervisor that you're capable of bringing out the best in others. And that's a key aspect of career advancement.

Follow these nine tips to improve your interpersonal skills in the workplace:



1. Cultivate a positive outlook. Teach yourself to be positive by reminding yourself every day of the good things about your life and your job. If you're upset about a personal matter, set those feelings aside until after work. If you're stressed about a work issue, look for the positive in the situation and try to build on that.

2. Control your emotions. Work isn't the place to be overly emotional. Whether you're extremely irritated, severely depressed or ecstatically happy, take a deep breath and tone your emotions down. Always express yourself in a calm, patient manner.



3. Acknowledge others' expertise. One of the best ways to build trust at work is to let your co-workers know you appreciate their expertise. Ask for their help on projects and give credit where credit is due.

4. Show a real interest in your colleagues. You work side-by-side with your colleagues for eight hours every day; it's only logical that you'll learn something about their lives. Make a point of getting to know what's important to your co-workers. It will help solidify your relationships with them.



5. Find one good trait in every co-worker. Not all of us like every single person we work with but you can't let personal preference get in the way of peak performance. If a colleague's personality clashes completely with your own, the best way to handle the situation is by finding at least one good trait in that person—preferably something professional.

6. Practice active listening. In the all Business article "Ten Ways to Improve Your Interpersonal Skills," the editors advise practicing active listening. You can do this by maintaining eye contact with the speaker, nodding your head, and repeating what he or she says in your own words. The speaker will feel respected and you're likely to be able to recall the conversation more easily afterwards.



7. Be assertive. According to the **Help Guide.org** article "Effective Communication: Improving Communication Skills in Your Work and Personal Relationships," it's important to be assertive. Be confident in your ability and opinions, and don't be afraid to express your needs, as well as your limits.

8. Practice empathy. Gain a well-rounded view of things by putting yourself in other people's shoes. This will help you develop empathy for others, which in turn goes a long way in finding solutions that work for all involved.



9. Maintain your relationships. Connect with college friends and former colleagues on social media or through email; try to set up face-to-face meetings now and then. This shows your connections that you still value the relationship—and that can go a long way in helping you advance your career.

Interpersonal Skills

A hand in a dark suit sleeve is holding a large, dark blue question mark. The text "GOT SKILLS?" is written in large, bold, dark blue capital letters across the middle of the image. The background is a light, neutral color.

**GOT
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